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THERE WAS SPREAD BEFORE THEM THE WHOLE PANOPLY OF WAR

CHECK-MATES IN FRANCE

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[illegible] WAR

BY

J. S. ZERBE

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

6-25-23

TRENCH-MATES IN FRANCE

ADVENTURES OF TWO BOYS
IN THE GREAT WAR

BY
J. S. ZERBE

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TRENCH-MATES IN FRANCE

TRENCH-MATES IN FRANCE

I

THE DECLARATION OF WAR

WHEN Jacques Egmont, the only son of well-to-do French parents, living at Mézières, left his home in the middle of July in order to take a course in electricity at one of the well-known schools of Paris, he bid his parents a happy good-by in the hope that in the early autumn they would see him in Paris, as it was the custom each year for Père Egmont to go to the French capital on business connected with his establishment.

The Egmonts were relatives of the Raouls, where Jacques was to be domiciled while there, and, moreover, his cousin Louis, of his

own age, and to whom he was devotedly attached, for several years had made a regular spring visit to Jacques's home, and together had many exploits, such as boys are wont to indulge in, and for this reason had many interests in common.

While Louis was not particularly interested in electricity, he was, nevertheless, an adept in the mechanical arts, and attended the same school. As a result the boys were together most of the time, and when, one afternoon, they were crossing the Champs-Élysées on their way to the Pont Alexandria their attention was directed to the great concourse of people gathering in the vicinity of the Place de la Concorde.

"I wonder what all the excitement is about," cried Jacques. "Let us follow the crowd."

Together they moved along the street to the east, while from the adjoining streets could be seen hundreds of men rushing by hurriedly, and many of the vehicles on the broad thoroughfare stopped, and some turned around, to witness the spectacle.

"I have suspected this for some time," remarked a bearded man who was addressing

another, as they also hurried their steps to the great open Place.

As they moved along the curiosity of the boys grew with every step.

"*Pardonnez moi!*" said Louis, as he courteously raised his cap and addressed the man who had just spoken. "Would you be kind enough to tell us what the excitement is about?"

The man turned and, with a bow of acknowledgment, said, "Germany has declared war!"

Louis stopped. Then he turned to Jacques. "I heard father speak about it yesterday, but we are not having any trouble with Germany, and the man may be mistaken."

An immense crowd had collected at the great Arc which led to the Garden of the Tuileries at the eastern side of the Place.

The great bell on Saint-Sulspice was striking six when the boys reached the Arc. It is singular how information will filter through a crowd. Those who came up were quickly and eagerly inquiring the news from those who were fortunate to get there first.

"It is true," said one, "that war has been declared."

"When, and against whom?" asked a voice.

"Germany against Russia; at five o'clock," was the answer.

The tension was relaxed. "That means France," shouted another. "Then we are ready," was the reply from a dozen or more.

Then, as in all cases where excitement is tense and the crowd is deep, a swaying commenced. How such movements start it is impossible to say; comments became more frequent and louder as the emotions and the feelings grew in intensity.

Away off in the crowd a strong voice began the first line of the "Marseillaise," and this was instantly taken up by the vast multitude, and the swaying waves, so perceptible the moment before, changed, and became one vast rhythmical motion as the strains were caught up and repeated in the distance.

The boys were all excitement now. They passed from one point to the other to learn more news, and were rewarded, for, when they emerged at the Rue de Rivoli the first sheets, announcing the declaration of war, were being distributed, and the glaring head-lines told part of the story.

"The German Forces Are Mobilizing at

Aix-la-Chapelle!" said one. Another, from Verdun, read: "The First Force from Metz Is On Its Way to the Frontier." "The Belgians Will Resist Invasion."

"And all this has come about since five o'clock," said Jacques, and he glanced at the near-by clock and saw that it was now only six-thirty.

"Father must know about this at once," said Louis, and together they hurried to the nearest underground station, and within twenty minutes were at their home in the Avenue de Wagram, not far from the Arc de Triomphe.

Père Raoul had remained at home all that day, owing to a severe indisposition, and when the boys informed him of the scenes at the Place he was not at all surprised.

"Germany has been preparing for this for a long time," he answered. "The papers have explained the situation. Probably it is better that it should come now than later," he said, with a sigh.

"But why should we be brought in?" asked Jacques.

"We are the ally of Russia. The assassination of the heir apparent to the throne of

Austria several weeks ago by those in sympathy with Servia is the cause of the trouble."

"In what way did that have anything to do with the Germans attacking us?" asked Louis.

"For the reason that Austria made certain demands of so far-reaching a character that it would have meant the end of Servia if she had accepted."

"It does not seem to me that would be a good cause for war against us," remarked Louis.

"No; not that, it is true. But Russia knew that to permit Austria to carry her point would mean the dismemberment of Servia, so she served notice on Austria that the demands must be modified or she would be compelled to aid Servia. As Austria refused, the Czar began to mobilize his troops on the Austrian frontier."

"I see now how that was brought about, but the papers said that the Kaiser is the one who declared war."

"Yes; Germany, Austria, and Italy are bound by an alliance to aid one another, and as soon as Russia had served notice on Austria the German Kaiser sent an ultimatum to the Czar."

"What is an 'ultimatum'?"

"It means a final statement or proposal, or a demand in terms that will not permit of any variation."

"What was the demand?"

"That Russia agree to demobilize her troops within twelve hours or he would declare war."

"But it is still not clear to me why Germany should attack us first if what the papers say is true," reasoned Jacques.

"Germany, no doubt, is proceeding on the theory that Russia cannot possibly get any force of sufficient strength near her frontier for at least six weeks to give any trouble, and she knows that France can get her army ready within two weeks, so that the first attack will be made against us in the hope that within a month we may sue for peace and that will then give ample time to enable her to direct the entire force against Russia."

"But this paper also says that the Belgians will be involved."

"I doubt whether there will be any trouble in that direction, because all the Powers have guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium."

"What does neutrality mean?"

"When applied to nations it has reference to an agreement or convention that in the case of war the soil and the citizens of a certain country shall not be violated by any of the Powers interested; and as Belgium's neutrality has been guaranteed by England, Germany, France, Russia, and Austria, it is not likely Germany will attempt to cross that country in order to fight us. In the last war with Germany Bismarck refused to touch Belgian soil for this reason."

Paris was one seething mass on the night of August 3, 1914. Crowds gathered at every conceivable place where there was an opportunity to hear the news; the excitement was intense. Many were there who, forty-four years previous, were called to the standard to fight the same enemy.

The morning papers confirmed the worst. Germany had declared war against France, and her troops were already on the way to cross the frontier. Belgium had formally refused to permit the Kaiser to cross her borders.

Before night Paris knew what England had decided. She was a party which had guaranteed the integrity of Belgium, and had notified Germany that to do so would mean war with

her also. This intelligence was the great factor which cheered every heart in France. But there was another matter that had not been decided. Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, and there was no apparent attempt on her part to take a part in the struggle.

At breakfast Louis said, "What was the Triple Alliance for?"

"An agreement between Germany, Austria, and Italy whereby they were to mutually protect one another in case either should be attacked by another Power."

"In that case Italy will surely help the Germans."

"That is not certain, for the reason that the agreement provides that each is bound only in the event some other country should declare war. As it is, Germany has declared war, and that may relieve Italy of the obligation."

"But isn't there also an alliance between France and England?"

"Yes; and with Russia also. The three Powers have formed what is called the Triple Entente, the purpose of which is also the same as the alliance referred to."

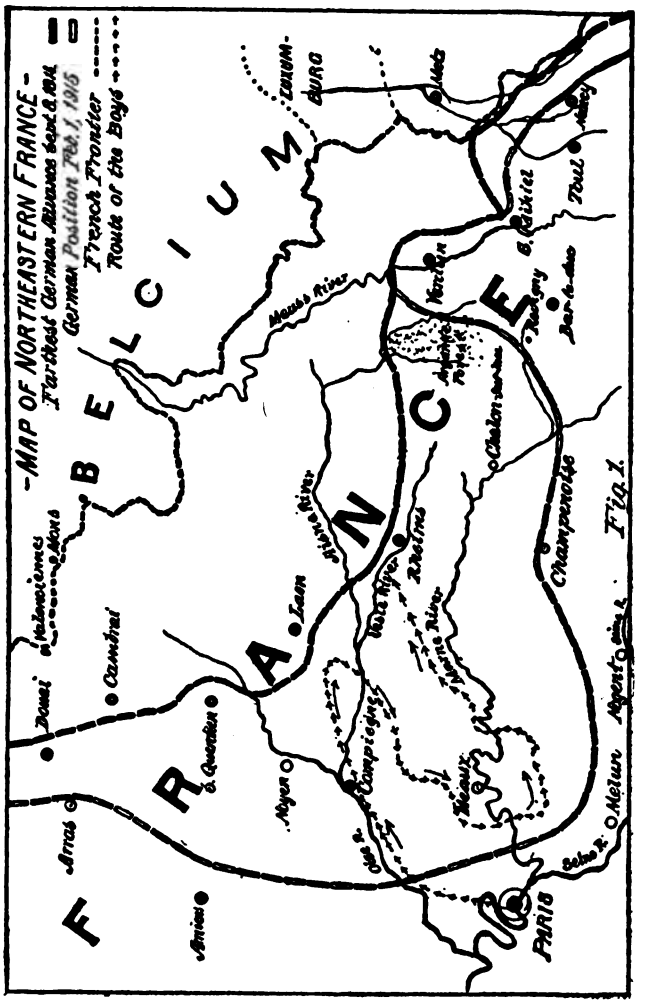
It seemed as though every one in the city had congregated on the Rue de Rivoli, and along the various avenues and streets which led to the Tuileries, and the news began to come in with regularity, but much was still in doubt.

Before the sun had arisen posters were stuck up announcing the order for the mobilization of troops. Service is compulsory in France, as it is in Germany. The new law was now in effect, which required that each young man, if physically capable, must bear arms for three years, and thereafter be subjected to certain periods of yearly drill.

The first reserves, those who have had the most thorough training, were the first to be called on. Those who were serving at the time of the declaration of war were the regulars, and were the first to be entrained and sent to the theater of conflict.

In order to understand the situation, and the circumstances under which the boys happened to enter the conflict, and to see many of the stirring events, it would be well to explain the situation at this time.

A full-page map (Fig. 1) showing the northeastern portion of France, including Belgium and a portion of Germany as far as the


-MAP OF NORTHEASTERN FRANCE-
Farthest German Advance Sept. 8, 1914
German Position Feb. 1, 1915
French Frontier
Route of the Boys
F R A N C E
B E L G I U M
LUXEMBURG
Douai
Valenciennes
Mons
Cambrai
Arras
Amiens
S. Quentin
Laon
Noyon
Compiegne
Meuse River
Moselle River
Nancy
Toul
Verdun
Metz
Rheims
Chalons
Champenoise
Meaux
PARIS
Melun
Nogent
Fig. 1.

Rhine, is shown, with a few of the principal towns and cities and the rivers in this region.

Paris is geographically about one hundred miles south of Dieppe, on the English Channel, and the Rhine is two hundred and fifty miles to the east. The frontier between France and Germany is approximately twenty-five miles west of the Rhine, and the two countries are in contact with each other along a line not more than two hundred miles in length, reaching from Switzerland on the south, to Luxembourg at the extreme northern end.

The line between Luxembourg and France is less than thirty miles in length, and then comes Belgium, with the dividing-line irregular, but extending in a general northwesterly direction to the English Channel, two hundred and fifty miles away.

A further examination of the map will show that Germany has four frontiers on her western border; first that of Holland, which has a narrow strip that extends down below the main body of that country to within fifteen miles of Liège; second, that of Belgium, a contact strip of a little more than forty miles; third, the line which is along Luxembourg,

sixty miles long; and fourth, the frontier of France, as stated.

It will thus be seen that while Germany and France have two hundred miles of frontier through which attack could be made, there was actually less than one hundred miles if the attempt should be made through neutral territory.

The boys were busily consulting their maps, under the direction of Louis's father, after gathering in the library the second night after the last interview.

"Why should the Germans break their pledge and go through Belgium when they could as well attack us through our own frontier?" asked Jacques.

"After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, France rebuilt her fortified places at Verdun, San Mihiel, Nancy, Toul, Belfort, and at other available points between, to be used as a means of defense for the future."

"Why did we not make the same provision against the Belgians?"

"Because Belgium was established as a neutral state, and the same was also true of Luxembourg; and relying on the integrity of the German people, it was not believed

that they would throw aside their agreement and invade either of those countries."

"I now recall that Mézières is less than seventy-five miles from Germany, and we live less than ten miles from the Belgian frontier," remarked Jacques, as he intently examined the map.

Four days after the above conversation, Père Raoul received a letter from Jacques's father which was full of misgivings, and while there was no immediate cause for alarm, he felt that if the Germans should advance by way of the Meuse he and his family would go to Paris, and thus avoid much of the troubles which might arise by being enveloped within the German lines.

While the information that the family might come to Paris was a pleasant one to the boys, it was with sorrow that they heard of the rapid advance of the enemy.

They were cheered day after day at the stubborn resistance of Liège, which refused to yield; and it was not until the 11th of August, eight days after the declaration of war, that the first forts fell. But in the mean time the Germans had no difficulty in sweeping away the small Belgian army

which occupied the narrow stretch of territory at the extreme southern point of Belgium, and it had no opposition in its rush through Luxembourg, and with the strong force which they had at Metz, eighty miles southeast of Mézières, a week was sufficient for them to cross the Meuse to the north and to the south of the city, and thus completely isolate it from France.

Whether or not Jacques's father received the reply to his letter and the accompanying one from the son was not known at that time, but the family was not permitted to pass the lines, and Jacques was in great distress until reassured by his uncle that they would be safe.

It was a difficult task for the boys to remain at school. Every one was at fever-heat, and to add to the difficulties the teachers in the school, one after the other, were missed as they joined the colors. The last one to go was the professor in practical engineering who had attained the rank of captain in the service and was known to the boys as Dad Hubert, but more familiarly, Dad. Boys have a habit of giving expressive names, and it is singular that the peculiar names are

always bestowed on those who are the nearest and dearest; and it is usually the case that the boys who have the most characteristic traits are the most apt to get the nicknames.

But Dad was a character. Over fifty years of age and a bachelor, he felt and acted like a boy, nevertheless; and in the field sports in which he reveled something was wrong if he happened to be absent or was not in his regular place as referee. Many of the boys felt like crying when they learned that he had gone to the front, but they gloried in the fact that Captain Hubert had taken up the sword as a duty, and they envied him, and wished in their hearts that they, too, might be permitted to go.

When the boys walked home that evening, after the few hours spent at their tasks that day, they little expected that their ardent wish would be fulfilled with such startling suddenness.

II

IN THE SERVICE

LOUIS and Jacques were both proficient in running automobiles, as it was part of the practical course taught at the school. Jacques had made a special study of the electrical problems required, and Louis was particularly interested in the mechanism of the car. Père Raoul had a family machine, and Jacques's father had several connected with his private garage, to say nothing of a dozen or more which were part of his commercial enterprises.

Each day the congestion due to the movement of troops was more apparent. They were coming in from the south and southwest, and were moving to the north and northeast, so as to get within the battle zone.

While many of the brigades marched through and around the city to take up their positions—a course which was necessary, due

to the lack of transportation—it was obvious that some additional means would be necessary to transfer the vast forces coming in on every train. As a result the government requisitioned all the automobiles which were to be found, and from eight to ten thousand of these vehicles afforded a means whereby a hundred thousand men could be transported from one side of the city to the other within twenty-four hours, and thus land a body in a mass at the most convenient railway station to the north or to the east of the city with very little confusion.

It was the first time in the history of warfare that such a rapid transfer of armies was made. Ordinarily, a large body of troops will not march more than from eighteen to twenty miles a day. A forced march is not over thirty miles, and to do this, for every ten thousand men, will require at least four parallel roads. It is not the room required for the marching men, but their equipment must be considered. The horses and wagons, the commissary and hospital wagons, as well as the artillery—for all armies must be provided with this character of weapons—take up an immense amount of room.

An examination of the map of Paris shows four main railway stations—one in the northwest, one in the northeast, another in the eastern section, and the other in the south, all more or less connected with one another, but they were entirely inadequate to meet the requirements of conveying the immense masses of troops and the munitions of war which were demanded, while the Germans were forging their way across Belgium and northern France.

The boys were now too much excited at the stirring scenes to give school much attention; and besides it was, through lack of teachers, entirely disorganized, so that much of their time was now given to watching the great preparations which were going forward to check the enemy before he could reach the gates of the city.

To the ordinary American boy the word *gates*, as applied to cities, is entirely inconceivable. Most of them imagine that this is only a fancy term designed to indicate the entrance in a general way. But that conception is entirely wrong. Paris, like many other continental cities, has actual gates, which are closed at certain periods of the

night, and during the day are closely guarded by officers, whose functions are to collect the duties imposed on certain goods brought into the city. That duty is something like our tariff on foreign-made goods, and collected for the same purpose, namely, to provide the running expenses of the city. Surrounding the entire city is a wall, in many places forty feet high, of stone masonry, with a wide moat, or ditch, outside of the walls. This wall is twenty-two miles long, within which is the city proper. The gates in these walls are at the principal streets only, and it is, therefore, impossible to gain entrance except through these guarded portals.

It was the ancient capital of a small Gallic tribe, called the Parisii, fully two thousand years ago, and then became the capital of Constantius Chlorus in the year 300; the seat of government of Clovis in 500; and subsequently was ruled by counts under the Carolingians, then under the Capetians, and finally was conquered by Philip Augustus, and later by St. Louis.

During the intervening period, down to the year 1420, seventy-two years before America was discovered, it had many rulers, until

Henry V. of England conquered the city, and the English in turn were expelled in 1436.

It was many times besieged, and the whole of central and northern France was for centuries the battle-ground for the great forces between the northern and southern parts of Europe, for two reasons: first, because the soil of France is the most fertile in Europe; and second, because this country is comparatively level, and was the shortest route from the Mediterranean to the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

Through this great fertile country—the only passageway between the Alps on the east, and the Pyrenees and the Cantabrian mountains in Spain, to the west—the vigorous Romans fought their way to the sea against the hordes which came from the east through Germany and Belgium; and everywhere, even now, on these well-watered plains, may be seen the well-kept traces of the struggles of early humanity.

The boys were to travel over the most historic ground in Europe. No other space in the whole known world has been the scene of so many battles, nor is the soil of any country enriched by the blood of as many different

tribes as contended for the mastery here. It will be interesting, therefore, to point out many of these localities, showing where some of the great battles were fought, and in this way get an intelligent view of much that has great historic value.

The real romance in the lives of the two boys began when, after the usual afternoon quest for news, they saw an immense procession of automobiles returning from the northern part of the city, all proceeding westerly along the Boulevard Hausseman to the western entrance.

By accident the boys were called to one of the machines by a young man well known to Louis, the son of their next neighbor, who was engaged as the military chauffeur of one of the cars. They gladly accepted the invitation to accompany him, and, putting on speed, soon passed the Place d'Étoile; and after hurriedly speeding through the Avenue de la Grande Armée, emerged at the Bois de Boulogne and ran direct toward St.-Cloud, where the troops were being disembarked at the station, which was the terminus of the western lines outside of the fortifications.

On the way numerous machines were found

abandoned by the agents in charge of the government transportation, some of them magnificent seven-passenger machines, which the boys noted.

"What is the matter with all these abandoned cars?" asked Louis. "It is a shame they are not in use."

"All out of order," answered Henry.

"Let us examine some of them," remarked Jacques. "What will they do with us if we fix them up and run them?"

"Well, if you can fix up any of them and come along with me I will see to it that you are rewarded. We need hundreds of cars."

"Come on, Jacques; here is our chance," said Louis, stepping to the foot-board, while Henry turned the machine to the side and stopped.

"Here is a fine machine. Crank it up, Louis."

While the latter ran to the forward end of the machine Jacques hurriedly examined the oil-tank and found it empty. "This will never do. Try another; there is no petrol here," exclaimed Jacques.

The adjoining machine was nearly filled with fuel oil, and Louis mounted the seat,

while Jacques gave it a whirl; but it was *dead*. The hood was raised and an examination made of the sparking device. A few minutes were sufficient to locate the trouble. The wires from the magneto and also from the battery had been broken, and it was but the work of a moment to rectify this, and the machine was as good as ever.

"It seems to me that was a singular thing that both wires should have been severed. It looks suspicious," remarked Henry.

"What makes you think so?" asked Louis.

"The chances are that the man running that car did it designedly. You had no trouble in finding the difficulty, and the man who had charge of the car should have been able to find where the defect was."

"That is true," assented Louis; "but it may never have occurred to him where the real trouble was, and he simply had to report that the car was *dead*."

"What shall we do now?" asked Jacques.

"Follow me, and don't stop for any one."

Louis took the wheel and traveled behind Henry's machine, and after crossing the bridge they ascended the hill and approached the station at St.-Cloud. Before they were

about to turn Henry stopped, and motioned Louis to run alongside. As he came up Henry said, "I am going to take you to the main despatcher and tell him the circumstances so as to get you registered, and that will protect you."

They entered the inclosure, and Henry, springing from the machine, approached an officer, to whom he gave his number and the number of his car. Louis followed, and, turning, Henry said, "These boys, both mechanicians, found that car abandoned in the Bois, and at my suggestion repaired it and are anxious to be of service."

The boys both saluted, in the exact manner they had noticed Henry do it, and the officer smiled, and answered: "Well, if they are able to fix up a car of that kind they are able to pilot it. Here, orderly. Take the number of the car and give this boy— Which one?" he inquired, after looking at both.

"Give it to Louis; I will get another car on the way back," answered Jacques.

"Good boy!" remarked the officer. "You are the kind of *men* we want," and he emphasized the word *men*. "Wait a moment. Make out an order authorizing this young man to

select and repair any car in the service, and bring it here."

The words were so welcome that Jacques could hardly restrain himself, and he said, "Thank you! thank you!" over and over, while the officer smiled at the exuberance of the boys.

"I am ready for service, sir!" said Louis.

"Have you plenty of petrol?"

"I think so; if not, what shall I do?"

"With this order you can get a supply at any time," and he handed a slip which the orderly had just brought.

"I suppose I can go back on Louis's car?" said Jacques.

"Yes; your order will secure you any accommodations; but before you leave, you must see to it, Henry, that the two new recruits are provided with suitable caps and coats."

Henry was delighted at this turn of affairs, and, stepping back a pace, saluted, and was then directed to the platform while Louis backed up his car, and both were soon filled.

"Come with me, Jacques, while there is still a little time, and get the caps and coats." And they started on a run for the small store-

room across the way, where the desired articles were soon in their possession, and Jacques carried Louis's suit back with him.

Each of the machines carried ten soldiers, and Jacques stood on the foot-board. Speed laws were not recognized during those eventful days. The order was to *get there*, and every policeman knew that the great badge on the side of the car meant "In the service of the government," and that the soldiers were being hurried to the front.

As they entered the Bois, Jacques said: "When you reach a good-looking car, let me out. I will have one in order by the time you get back."

"But I don't know where we are going and when we shall get back."

The men on board laughed. None of them knew the destination. "I will ask Henry," said Jacques as he leaped from the machine.

"Oh yes! We shall return in two hours. We can make the trip to the northern connections within an hour and a half, and it will not take me to exceed three-quarters of an hour to return."

Jacques felt like a conqueror as he strode

forth. At least a dozen machines of all sizes were in view. He made a careful examination of those near at hand, and finally selected one which, from all appearances, might be brought into service. With nothing but the tools in the chest, he opened the hood and carefully tested every part. In a half-hour the engine finally started, and then he was surprised to find that there was not sufficient petrol to run it very far. After examining several of the near-by derelicts he was delighted to find one with a sufficient supply, and the repaired machine was run over and preparations made to take the required petrol.

During this proceeding Jacques did not know that the vigilant police were watching him, and as soon as he began to transfer the liquid one of them approached and demanded that he accompany him. Jacques demurred, but there was no answer to the demands of the officer.

"I have the authority for this," said Jacques, pulling out the permit. After reading it the officer whistled to a companion, while Jacques unconcernedly continued in his work.

The officer, after consulting with his com-

panion, quietly handed back the document with a polite bow. At the sound of the whistle numerous visitors in the woods came up and witnessed the proceedings, but Jacques had a feeling of importance now.

This incident would not have happened if Jacques had not removed his cap and coat prior to the commencement of his work, but when he donned his coat and cap the feelings of the crowd immediately changed. He then recognized that he was only a boy, and the fact that he was engaged in trying to get one of the requisitioned machines looked questionable to the police, and to the crowd as well.

After the tank was filled Jacques went from one machine to the next and examined them. This still more surprised the people. Fortunately, he had no trouble in starting up another, and the question now was to get it down to St.-Cloud. Turning to one of the idlers standing near, he said, "Do you want a job?"

After hesitating a while the man answered, "What kind of a job?"

"Get into that car, after I hitch it on, and steer it down to St.-Cloud."

"No," he drawled; "I think I have better business."

One of the policemen stepped over to Jacques and remarked in an undertone: "Just order him to do it. You are in the service of the government, and you have a right to demand his service."

Jacques stared at the officer for a moment. A new light seemed to break in on him. "I will do it," he said.

Stepping over to the man, he said, "I demand your services, and if you do not comply I shall report you to the police for refusing to aid the government."

The man looked at Jacques with a leer, which gradually faded away as the policeman came up. The latter merely said, "It would be wise for you to heed his demand."

There was an instant change in his expression as he sprang forward and exclaimed: "Why didn't you say so? Here I am, ready for it."

Together they soon attached the trailer, and Jacques took his place in the car and found his assistant fairly well adapted for the position, although it was evident that he knew nothing about running a machine, from the

constant manœuvering which he found necessary with the wheel, so that the trip during the first part of the run was rather slow.

When they came into the inspector's yard at St.-Cloud, and Jacques saw the officer who had given him the order, he wasted no time in making his report:

"I have the honor to report that I have repaired and brought two machines from the Bois."

The officer fairly bubbled with pleasure. "Two of them!" he said. "Are any more of them there?"

"Dozens of them," answered Jacques.

"You are the man I want. Will you undertake to bring them in for me?"

"Yes; if you will give me two men, and some tools."

"You can have anything you want, my boy. Here, orderly; send for Constant and his helper. Bring all his tools. Better still; go with him, my boy, and take anything you want, and the orderly will have the orders here for you when you are ready to start."

As Jacques was about ready to start he turned to the officer and said, "This man,

whom I found in the Bois, was a most willing helper, and I think he ought to be paid for his services, as without him I could not have brought both machines down."

"Then he may accompany you, and his name will be placed on the rolls. Here, step up and sign this slip."

The man gave Jacques a look of thankfulness which was never forgotten. He followed the boy and most gratefully acknowledged his kindness.

"Where do you live?" asked Jacques.

"Near the Bastile."

"Have you a family?"

"Yes. I have had no work for a long time, and I began to feel bitter to every one. When you asked me to accompany you I did not know, nor could I see, where it would be of any use to me. They would not take me in the army because of my physical condition. I have no trade, so I am dependent for the support of my family on such odd jobs as I can pick up. Do you think this gives me employ in the service of the government?"

"Yes," answered Jacques.

"Then I will remember you. My name is Taulbert."

III

TRANSPORTING AN ARMY WITH AUTOMOBILES

LOUIS followed Henry's machine in its swift flight through the city, and emerged near Pantin, at the northeast extremity, where the railway lines had made preparations to receive and forward the entrained soldiers.

The return was signaled by Henry as soon as the men alighted, and there was a constant speed contest on hand between the two, as they had now determined to return around the city by way of Clichy-la-Garenne, and from that way go through the Bois de Boulogne and thus avoid the congested streets of the city.

In a little over two hours they entered the upper end of the Bois and were now on the watch for Jacques. Before reaching Auteuil they caught sight of five machines, two of which were being towed. Louis shouted to

Henry, who was behind, that the machines on the road beyond looked suspicious to him, and they turned at the first cross-cut, which brought them alongside of the machines.

There was Jacques in the first machine, who quickly recognized Louis, and the latter shouted and waved his hand. "What are you doing with all these machines?"

"I am the government surgeon for disabled cars," said Jacques, with a laugh. "This makes seven cars."

"Seven! Where are the other two?"

"At St.-Cloud; or probably on the way with soldiers."

"Good for you!" cried Henry. "What did the old man say?"

"The old man? Whom do you mean?" asked Jacques.

"Colonel Mereau, the transportation officer. We always call him that."

"Well, he thought it was a pretty neat thing to do; I know he felt pretty jolly when I brought in the two cars."

"But how could you bring in both cars alone?"

"I didn't. I picked up a man; he is in the last car now."

"Who are the men running the other cars?"

"They are my helpers. The colonel told me to take whatever I wanted in the way of tools, and directed the three men to help me. I am afraid it is too late to get in some more of the cars I have spotted."

"I have an idea," remarked Louis. "Why not hold up some of the returning machines and get them to pull in the cars?"

"That would do if I had the men to steer the machines."

The scheme worked itself into Jacques's mind without much delay. "Here," he almost shouted. "Why can't you and Henry pull in two of these cars, and I will get some men to help with the two others while we go back for more of them?"

"But where can we get the men?" asked Henry.

"See those men in the Bois? I will command them to assist." And Jacques sprang from the machine and ran toward a policeman who was watching them, while Louis and Henry laughed, not knowing the experience which had taught Jacques a thing or two.

"I am commissioned by the government transport service to repair and bring in the

damaged cars. I need men to assist me, and am authorized to demand that the citizens shall help me. I want your aid," and he exhibited the order which the colonel had given him.

To the great surprise of Henry and Louis, the policeman turned to some men and they came forward. In the mean time Taulbert came up with a ragged-looking man and said, "Monsieur Jacques, here is a man, a friend of mine, who is only too willing to help."

"Thank you," said Jacques. "Come along; get into this machine and don't waste any time. Go on, Louis; and you may tell the colonel that we shall have some more ready in another hour." And he speeded away with the four helpers.

"Can either of you men run a machine?" asked Jacques.

Two signified their ability to do so, one being the man that Taulbert had found. "That is fine," continued Jacques. "Are you employed?" he asked.

When he learned that they were free and desirous of taking jobs, he assured them that they would be put to work the moment St.-Cloud was reached.

As the sun was going down that night Jacques's train of five derelict cars slowly moved into the inclosure at St.-Cloud and steered straight to the colonel's quarters.

The officer hailed him, and after Jacques had saluted, the latter said: "I have brought in all the cars at the lower end of the Bois. I don't know whether there are any more farther north."

"How many have you fixed up?" he asked, with a smile.

"I think this makes twelve, only," he said, somewhat apologetically.

"Only twelve? Well, you have rendered the government excellent service. I shall make a proper report in the matter, and provide for your reward."

"Thank you," replied Jacques. "I don't care so much for myself, as I don't need any help, but there are some men here who have gladly helped me, and I hope they will be well paid for what they have done," and he indicated the men, who lined up and saluted the officer.

"That is manly of you. I feel it a duty to respond to your wishes. Step forward, men; I will give you work; there is plenty to do.

The corporal will ascertain what you are capable of doing, and place you on the roll."

This decision gave Jacques, and Louis, too, as much satisfaction as the compliments which the colonel bestowed on them.

But it was now too late to return to the Bois for additional cars, but not too late to transport the troops. Jacques begged permission to take charge of one of the cars in its trip to the north, and informed the colonel that two of the new men were competent to run the newly rescued cars, and he was delighted at the opportunity to provide the recruits with the proper caps and coats, and with due orders to take charge of the cars.

As they were about to start on the trip Louis said, "I am afraid my people will be alarmed at my absence, and we must let them know what we are doing."

"Then we shall go out the Avenue de Wagram, after reaching the Place d'Étoile, and stop long enough to inform them," said Henry.

The train of six machines, each of which carried ten men, halted before the home of Louis, and his father was dumfounded as

his son alighted and sprang up the steps, followed by Jacques, both of them with the strange coats and the neat government caps.

"What does all this mean?" asked Père Raoul, with a gasp.

"We thought something happened to you," remarked the mother, with a great sigh of relief.

"We are in the service of the government," said Louis, proudly.

"How? and when?" asked his mother, inquiringly.

In the mean time Henry came in, and in a few words explained the situation, to the joy of the parents. "They have done noble work, and we are now taking over more men. Come down and look at the procession of machines. The boys have put a dozen machines into service, and this is Louis's third load from St.-Cloud to Pantin."

The mother's heart swelled with pride, and the father showed by his actions that the boys' determination to serve France had his hearty approbation.

"I am so thankful," said the mother, as tears of happiness came to her eyes. "Go on, and do the best you can, for France needs

you; but take good care of yourselves." And with a motherly kiss the two boys leaped down the stairs, afraid lest the signs of tears would make them imitators.

"Good-by, Jeanne," he said, as he kissed and waved his hand to his little sister.

"Do you intend to come back to-night?" asked Père Raoul.

"We cannot tell," responded Henry. "We may keep this up all night. They are still coming in by the thousands, and we shall keep at it as long as we can hold up."

The street was full of people when the boys came out. Many of those present recognized the boys, and an immense cheering began. You may imagine the pride and joy that filled the hearts of the two boys as they mounted the machines and sped away.

Early the next morning the parents and the sister and brother of Louis motored down to St.-Cloud, as the boys had not returned and they were exceedingly anxious to learn about them.

After crossing the bridge and on the way up the hill, an officer rode up to the car and, after politely saluting M. Raoul, remarked: "I must take this car in behalf of

the government, as we need every machine for the transportation of troops. I regret the inconvenience it will cause you."

Père Raoul knew that remonstrances would be of no avail, so politely requesting that they be permitted to proceed in the machine to St.-Cloud, the officer detailed one of the troopers to accompany the car.

"Who is the officer in command of the transportation service here?" asked Raoul of the guard.

"Colonel Mereau. You will find him at his quarters, to the left of the station."

The family alighted at the station, and the father sought the officer. The latter ordered him to be admitted, and to him he stated his case. "I have brought my family to see my boys who yesterday entered the service, and my machine was requisitioned a mile below here."

"Is it a good machine?" asked the colonel.

"Yes," he responded.

"That is just the kind we are in need of. You must understand that as a Frenchman it is your duty to give the machine to the government for its use when called on."

"That I am only too happy to do; but

you know it is impossible, in the congested condition of things, to get my family back; if that is done you are welcome to the machine."

"The necessity of getting the soldiers across is of far more importance than the convenience of your family; this looks hard, but it is a military necessity."

"Then, as my boy and his cousin are now engaged as chauffeurs to take soldiers across the city, I thought I could find a way by which they could be conveyed in that way without interfering with the service."

"Do you say you have two boys in the service here?"

"Yes."

"What are their names?"

"Louis and Jacques."

The colonel sprang up and grasped Père Raoul by the hand. "The government does not need your car. The boys have worked like men, and have done me the greatest service. No, no, we shall not need your car; but we need the boys." And he turned to Mme. Raoul and gave a courtly bow, and smiled at the children.

"We were so anxious to see the boys, as

they did not come home last night," remarked Mme. Raoul.

The colonel tapped a bell and the orderly appeared. "When did the last convoy come in?"

"At four this morning."

"Then they must be asleep," remarked the colonel. "Find out when the night convoys will start."

During the absence of the orderly the colonel conversed with Raoul, and the latter was delighted to learn that the officer was only two years ahead of him in the army classification; and they knew of many interesting incidents which had taken place while they were together in the service.

"They are ready to start now," reported the corporal.

The colonel led the way across the open space which was now filled with cars of every description. The first thing that Père Raoul saw was his own car, filled with soldiers, and Louis and Jacques standing by its side, wondering how it happened that their own car was thus in line.

The colonel laughed as he saw the consternation on the faces of the boys. But the

latter immediately saw the father and mother by the colonel's side, and they suspicioned the situation at once.

"You must take another car, my men," said the colonel as he approached the car.

They slowly filed out, and stood there in amusement at the scene, for the boys were alert, and danced about as they saw the family, and jested with them about their experience in being robbed of the car in broad daylight.

"Yes, we are awfully sleepy," said Jacques; "but we couldn't afford to sleep any longer when there is so much to do."

"That is the proper spirit, my son, when you understand that the Germans have entered Brussels and are now passing through Mons."

"Then they have entered French territory all along the frontier?" asked Jacques, in alarm. "But where is our army?"

"There have been five battles fought within the past twenty-four hours. The English, as well as the French, are being driven back by force of overpowering numbers."

"Then they are coming to Paris?"

"Yes; at this rate they will be here within two weeks."

"But how far have they come into France from the east?"

"Ah! there they have been defeated. The forts at Verdun and Toul and Belfort have stopped them. But we must not detain you. I see that you have a great task before you. These troops must be gotten across without delay. Do not let us detain you."

The boys mounted the machines, and that entire day and night and part of the next day were spent in the trying task, until the boys, when they reached home two days afterward, were so tired out that they slept all night and most of the following day.

But they were too excited to remain away. As early as possible they reported to the colonel at St.-Cloud, and then learned that they should report at the headquarters of the Second Corps, then stationed at the camp to the north of Fort d'Aubervilles, where they would have charge of two machines at headquarters.

The boys were simply wild with delight at the assignment, and carried the official documents telling of their exploits as though they were trophies. Stopping only for a few minutes at home on the way across the city, to

exhibit the documents, they entered the machine with Père Raoul, and with Louis at the wheel, the caps and uniforms of the boys were sufficient to enable them to defy any speed laws, and the written order of the colonel to the father was sufficient to grant him immunity from any officers who might be prying about to seize the car on his return.

The boys were astounded at the sights which met their eyes as they passed the fortifications at the eastern side. In every available spot were troops and cavalry, while there seemed to be no end of wagons and ammunition-trains. Most of those troops were designed for resisting the advance of the Germans, who on that day were reported to be advancing from le Cateau and Charleville, only a hundred miles away.

As fast as possible the troops were sent to the front in every sort of conveyance, and it is estimated that fully eight thousand of these machines were used north of Paris to get the troops forward and thus stem the tide.

After arriving at headquarters and the credentials were examined, they were informed that they would be assigned during the day,

and were notified where and when to report for duty.

Père Raoul, after a sad parting, left them and hurried back, while the boys waited patiently for the first order. They did not wait long. The order was given to form the machines in line, and two cars assigned to them, and of these they took charge at once.

An officer on horseback gave the orders and supervised the loading of the machines, and after passing through St.-Denis the road paralleling the railway to Chantilly was traversed, and after reaching the latter place they were directed northeast in the direction of Compiègne.

There was no halting on the way. Six hundred machines, carrying over twenty-five thousand troops, were thus transported a distance of forty miles within eight hours, a feat unparalleled in war. This might have been doubled, but in many places the machines had to make wide détours to avoid the wagon and ammunition trains, as the railways were too crowded with the food-supplies to convey all that was needed in this direction.

At Compiègne the river Aisne makes a turn and runs due east. Midway between

that city and Soissons, twenty miles due east, is a high range of hills, extending north and south. On this wooded crest the great first line of defense was located.

The German army was near Laon, to the northeast, and was advancing from eight to ten miles a day. Shortly after leaving Compiègne the boys had a view of the first German prisoners, which were brought along in plain sight, and as the machines had stopped for luncheon and to enable the chauffeurs to replenish the petrol-tanks, they had an opportunity to notice their demeanor.

They walked along stolidly, apparently not affected by the fact that they were captives. Many of them were smoking, and unconcernedly begged their captors for lights as they marched by. Some even appeared to look happy and contented.

IV

THE MARCH TO THE FRONT

WHILE aeroplanes were familiar sights to the boys, they were now to see them for the first time actually engaged in the operations of war. Up to this time they had not heard a hostile gun. Every one in the cars was in expectancy.

Aerial machines increased in numbers; they were outlined against the eastern sky, going back and forth, and shortly after noon they saw the first huge outline of a giant Parsival which had come up from Paris and was going straight toward Laon. These scouts of the sky were noting the movements of the enemy and bringing back the reports, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the boys heard the first booming sounds, which they were scarcely able to recognize as the firing of cannon.

Colonel Thiebaud, in command of a portion

of the forces that were now being conveyed to the front, was in the first machine with Louis. He was a veteran of the war of 1870, and those with him watched his face as the first reverberations reached them.

Then his eyes lighted up. "Yes, that is the first we have heard." Louis thought it sounded like thunder. "At a distance that is the case," he said; "but as we get nearer you will hear the roar more continuous in its

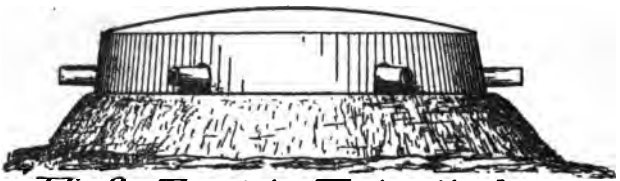


Fig. 2. Turret-top Fort of Maubeuge.

character, and then it will sound less like thunder. At this distance we hear only the heavy guns. Note how irregular the heavy discharges are."

"How far do you think we are from the battle-line?" asked Louis.

"Probably twenty miles. Our heaviest guns are not so far away, and it is not likely the Germans have the heaviest guns at the front, such as they used with such terrible

effect at Maubeuge; but if the great guns which the Germans have, and also our greatest field-pieces, were in action, we should hear them much plainer, even at that distance."

"How far can battle sounds be heard?"

"It is claimed that the battle of Waterloo was heard across the English Channel, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. However, it is not so much distance as the direction of the wind which determines the continuance of the sound-waves. You see, *sound* is vibration in the air, unlike the transmission of light vibrations, which are disturbances in the ether, hence a wind will perpetuate or carry the vibrations along to great distances."

"The wind is not blowing now, and this gives a good idea of how far we are away, if one is able to judge of the noises by past experiences," suggested one of the men.

"But while the air is still here, it may be blowing ten or fifteen miles an hour not many miles away, so it is difficult to determine distance; besides, the difference between the various guns is something to be considered. We have a number of seventy-five-millimeter guns, equal to about two and one-half-

inch bore, which I judge to be close up to the firing-line."

"My, but that was a big one!" exclaimed Louis, as a particularly heavy detonation resounded.

"Yes, that makes a noise like one of the howitzers. I should not be surprised to hear that it is one of the twenty-five-centimeter, nine-inch-bore guns which have been mounted on the height to which we are going."

Everything was excitement now. Every minute the noise seemed to increase in volume, and still more emphatic were the heavy booms that punctuated the roar, although the latter could be heard only at intervals.

A mile east of Attichy the cavalcade came to a halt. Why, no one knew. Several general officers with their staffs came along and passed the waiting soldiers. Soon the order came to move forward to the first road and turn to the right.

Thus far the roads had been in good condition, but now they were doomed to follow the lead made by hundreds of vehicles, and the rough service of the myriads of machines began to manifest itself in the broken and damaged cars which were dragged out of

the way so as to allow the columns to pass. Dozens and dozens of these machines were undergoing repair, and the drivers were a truly dirty and begrimed lot as they sweltered in the work of fixing them up. Then came a mounted column guarding more prisoners. They had been taken two miles south of Laon. As they ascended the hill and looked across the valley to the height beyond, the boys could see nothing which looked alarming. Here and there in the dim distance were little puffs of smoke, which the officers present decided were the German advance lines.

Still nearer was a line of white puffs that were unquestionably the French outposts. An officer, accompanied by several others, soon appeared, and the boys were now near enough to hear the first conversation about the course of events.

"They are coming from the north and also along the river, and we may expect them to concentrate here so as to cover the occupation of Soissons. As we have no orders to go forward, the men must be set to work along these ridges."

One of the staff-officers turned to an officer who had charge of the relief columns and or-

dered the troops to alight, and they were then ranged in line along the hill, under the direction of another who seemed to understand what was required.

"He is an engineer officer," said one of the men.

"Which one?" asked Jacques.

"The officer on the right who is pointing out the direction," the man replied.

"What do you think he is explaining?" Jacques asked.

"He is telling them where to dig the trenches."

From the hill to the east came a dozen wagons, and the boys soon saw them discharge short-handled shovels and picks. These were the intrenching tools. The colonel who commanded the troops brought up by the boys formed his men in line, and then made a short address, substantially as follows:

"The intrenching tools are for our use, and the captains are ordered to select every fourth man, who must bear a shovel and pick. These must be carried by him, either in advancing or retreating, so that the tools for digging will always be at hand. The corporals will give specific instructions as to the

duty on the line where the trenches are to be dug."

The men were selected, and as the companies filed along they were given the tools and marched to the lines designated by the engineer officers, where special instructions were issued as to the character of the furrows to be made, and which will be more specifically explained later on, so as to show how they were made.

The view from the height at this point is superb. To the northeast is Laon, eighteen miles distant, with a magnificent cathedral. It is an old Roman town, heavily fortified, and here were fought two great battles, one in March, 1814, a little over one hundred years ago, and the other in September, 1870, when the Germans were on their way to the city of Paris.

Directly east, and less than eight miles away, the boys could plainly see the Cathedral of Notre Dame arising out of the city of Soissons, which was also, formerly, a strongly fortified place; and here, all about, and particularly in the direction of the city, were fought four great and decisive battles—namely, in 486, 719, 1816, and in 1870.

A little beyond, and to the northeast of Soissons, is a small village—Craonne—also visible, where Napoleon checked the allied armies under Blücher in 1814.

To the rear, in the city of Compiègne, through which they had passed during the day, was situated the favorite royal palace of the kings of France, and it was there that Joan of Arc was captured in 1430.

When these sights were pointed out to the boys they truly felt that they were standing in the midst of sacred ground, because every one of these places had associations which must ever remain dear to the loyal Frenchman; and it can be understood with what a thrill the thunder of the guns now reached them, as they reflected that the enemies of their country were again covering these plains and bidding defiance to their countrymen and their liberties.

It was with considerable misgivings that the boys saw the emptied cars returning along the road that brought them to the heights. They awaited the word to return also, but instead were informed that the staff would use these cars, together with three other machines, and they knew this would give

them an opportunity to remain with the fighting forces in the field.

For this great favor their thanks were due to the letter which Colonel Mereau had written, and it was afterward learned that their service at headquarters might not be as onerous or trying as the duty of making the daily runs to Paris, a consideration which was due to the boys for their great service.

The boys were directly attached to the headquarters of General Cheron, and were fortunate enough to attract the attention of Lieutenant Breton, of the staff, an engineer officer, to whom they had unwittingly rendered a service on the second day after the general arrived.

They were posted about five hundred yards to the rear of the main line of trenches referred to, and the first duty of the lieutenant was to provide a means whereby the troops could be readily moved along the line, and this meant the preparation of roads and paths.

During the first days while the intrenching work was in progress there was little work for the boys. Every day there would be a trip or two back to Compiègne, on missions con-

nected with the staff, but during the intermediate periods the boys found it pleasant to accompany the lieutenant in his journeys.

On the third day the Twenty-third Regiment Field Artillery came up, and Lieutenant Breton was in his glory. Under his direction they were stationed to the right of the trenches just completed, but somewhat to the rear, and within an hour the Fifth Artillery came up the hill and were directed to the left.

But troops were still coming along, company after company, regiment after regiment. Where were they going?

The lieutenant smiled as he said, "Have you noticed the fresh line of dirt half-way down the hill?"

They now saw for the first time that the oncoming men had been at work below the crest. "But what are you making such big preparations here for?" asked Jacques.

"This is our main line. Look down near the foot of the hill. Do you see the men near the clearing to the left? That is still another line, which has worked itself into the ground, but all the big guns are posted near the high points, as you see."

"Well, if this is the main line on top, what are the two lines of trenches for back in the rear?" asked Louis.

"They are the ones we shall retreat to," he replied with a slight smile.

"Retreat to!" exclaimed both boys in a breath.

"Yes; that may sound strange, but we are not trying to assume the offensive. Our only object is to prevent a too rapid forward movement."

"Then we are really going back to Paris?" asked Jacques, in a tone of regret.

"Probably not to Paris; but the authorities are preparing a line of defenses as far from the German base as possible, and there we shall give them battle."

The boys were awakened the next morning by the most terrific explosion they had ever heard. Both jumped from their cots and stared about wildly. Outside were scurrying feet, and excited orders, and men hurrying to and fro. Looking out, they noticed a fresh train of artillery coming up the hill, the drivers plying their whips.

"What has happened?" asked Louis, as the lieutenant appeared, half dressed.

"That was a German shell from the heights this side of Oulchy-le-Château. I suppose we are in for it now," and he hurriedly made his toilet while the boys seized their garments in the excitement of the moment and struggled to distance each other in the dressing act.

The shell which awoke them alighted in the field about three hundred feet to the front of their position, and directly behind the trench in front of the one which seamed the top of the hill.

Scores of men were there to see the effect of the bursting charge, and they did not stop to make any more inquiries, as they saw the soldiers and officers going down the hill.

The lieutenant was already there, searching around for something which the boys could not understand.

"What is it?" asked Jacques. "What are you hunting for?"

"Trying to find a piece of it."

"What, of the shell?"

"Yes."

Taking the cue from this remark, the soldiers busied themselves at the same task, and soon one of the men brought a piece of blackened metal, triangular in shape, about

an inch and a half wide, two inches long, and probably an inch thick (Fig. 3).

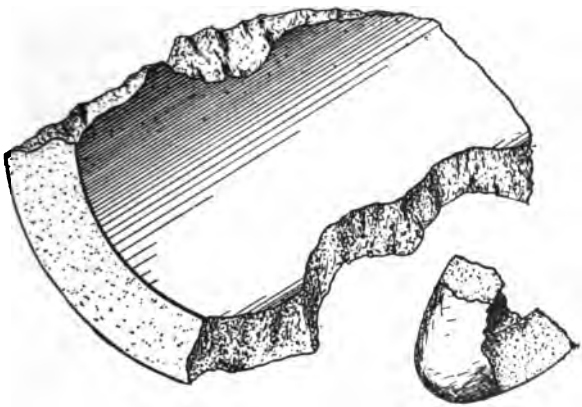


Fig. 3. Fragments of Shell.

"Ah! that must be from one of their twenty-one-centimeter[1] guns," remarked Breton, as he carefully examined the sample.

"I do not see how you can tell that the shell was twenty-one centimeters in diameter by simply looking at this piece," said Louis.

Breton turned with a smile as he responded, "This has one side only which gives the measurement," and he handed it to Louis.

The boys examined it carefully, and Jacques

[1] Twenty-one centimeters is equal, approximately, to eight inches.

said, "Do you mean this curved side?" (A, Fig. 3), indicating the smooth surface.

"Yes; that gives the arc of the circle. If you will mark that curve on a piece of paper, and then set a compass so that it will follow that circle, you will find that the diameter will be twenty-one centimeters."

"Did you make that calculation with the compass?"

"No; I had to depend on the eye for that; but this is part of my duty, to be able to judge of the whole by seeing only a fragment."

They marveled at the size of the excavation made by the shell. Some of the soldiers picked up stones which had been thrown two hundred feet, and the only one injured was a soldier in a trench, nearly a hundred feet beyond, by falling earth and small pebbles which reached him in a shower.

As nearly as could be judged the hole was five feet deep and fully twelve feet in diameter. The following day a fragment of the shell weighing four pounds was found embedded in a tree five hundred feet from the hole.

Many men went away from that place with thoughtful countenances. They were

being initiated into terrors that they knew were coming, and they had to brace themselves to meet their fate, whatever it might be.

Somehow or other, to the boys that exhibition of power brought a great change in them. They did not now feel so jolly and happy as before. Only three hundred feet between death and life. It weighed on them for many a day, notwithstanding they were afterward, on more than one occasion, in the midst of more terrific scenes, and where death lurked nearer than this seemed.

Through it all they could not forget the great awakening, for it aroused them in two ways most truly. Several weeks afterward, when, in the great battle of the Marne, the boys were two hours in the midst of flying shells, and saw many men fall about them, and witnessed all the horrible things which take place on the battle-field, Louis turned to Jacques and quietly said:

"This is awful; but, bad as it is, I cannot help thinking about the hole the big shell made on the hill west of Soissons when we first reached the battle-line."

This fact presents a very curious psychological fact to the thoughtful man. Why is it

that those things which we imagine are always so much more terrible than the reality? This is so only with the fearsome things in life. Men cannot imagine to the full extent the joys of things; but terrors are more acute than the reality can ever make them.

This was indeed so to the boys in their wanderings, and was exemplified in all their adventures. The writer remembers an experience of his own in a reputed haunted house, where he was told the most gruesome tale of the experiences which an investigator had undergone in trying to solve the mysteries of the place.

They were so blood-curdling that for years afterward it was impossible to pass the house without a shiver. When, subsequently, the one who made the investigation told the tale of his exploits, while its main features tallied with the description received in early life, it was looked upon by him as a mere commonplace experience, and really did not savor of the thrilling in any sense of the word.

The imagination pictures so many things. While the story is being told, the mind is active. It anticipates, and actually craves some horror; it would be a poor story if it

didn't have something in it that tended to make the spine grow cold.

The boys saw the great hole in the hill. It was an appeal to the imagination, because they began to conjure up what might have been the result if they had been a few hundred feet farther along.

In the terrible battle in the trench, the imagination could not play tricks with them. They saw, and the things were terrible, but they could not, in the excitement, make it more fearful, nor did it cause greater anguish.

V

THE FIRST BATTLE

ON the third day they were to witness scenes which began to give them an inkling of what war means. From out of the mist, north of Oulchy, white spots would appear, and gun after gun began to belch forth noises.

Occasionally shrapnel, and twice shells of larger caliber, fell within the region occupied by the two batteries. Shortly before noon the order was given for the batteries to open fire. The boys rushed over to see this new phase in their lives.

On the left side of each gun stood the officer whose duty it was to point the gun. On the right side was the man who fired the charge. Directly behind the piece the ammunition-case was set upright and provided with compartments, each large enough to hold a single shell.

Two men were in charge of the loading; the first carried the shell to the one at the breech, and the latter, immediately after each shot, would swing the lever to open the breech-block, which action also brought back the empty shell, thus leaving the bore open for the next shell.

Two monoplanes were hovering over the batteries, one of them being used as the eye of the battery where the boys stood. After each shot, for they were firing slowly now, a signal would be given and the gunner would make an adjustment.

They were delighted to see the lieutenant coming up, and ran to meet him. "I see the Germans are still pretty far off," he remarked as he glanced at the guns.

They looked at him for a moment, and then Jacques asked, "Have you heard how far they are away?"

"No; I merely judged by the angle of the guns."

"Angle of the guns! In what way does that indicate anything?" demanded Jacques.

"The angle of the gun has everything to do with the distance of the object aimed at. The enemy at which they are firing are now

just within range of those guns, because they are firing from an angle of forty-five degrees."

"Will the shell go farther at this angle than at any other?" Jacques asked.

"Yes; because the trajectory which is formed by the combination of the force of the powder and the gravitational pull are more nearly balanced, or offset each other, than if the shell was fired at any other angle, so that it will go farther."

"But how will the guns be pointed as they come nearer?" persisted Jacques.

"The muzzles of *these* guns will point lower and lower as they come up."

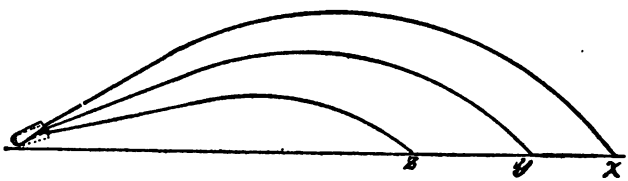


Fig. 4. Trajectory of shell.

"Why do you say 'these' guns?" Jacques asked. "Isn't it true of all guns?"

"No; in the case of howitzers the gun is pointed up higher and higher, so as to make the shells drop down as nearly vertically as possible. With shrapnel, however, the object

is to have a very low trajectory, as thereby it has a more effective sweep."

"I have never been able to understand that," acknowledged Jacques, "but it would not do to tell Dad Hubert that."

"Who is Dad Hubert?" asked the lieutenant.

"Oh, he is Captain Hubert now, our professor in engineering," Jacques explained.

The lieutenant laughed. "Probably I can make that clear to you by this little sketch. In this A shows the gun at forty-five degrees, and the shell reaches the position *x*."

"Yes; that is plain," admitted Jacques.

"Now, as the enemy advances to *y*, the gun, in B, is lowered, and the trajectory shows that it strikes the object. In C, which shows the object at still nearer, the gun is lowered to such a low angle that the trajectory is almost parallel with the surface of the ground, and when the shell explodes it sweeps over a large area and does a lot of damage."

"Well, why wouldn't it be well to use the same plan with howitzers?" Jacques wanted to know.

"Simply because they are designed to attack fortified places or forts, where a direct

fire against the walls would not be effective. In such cases the object is to drop the shell over into the works, and this sketch [Fig. 5] will show how the raising of the gun-muzzle becomes necessary as the distance decreases.

"Thus, in the sketch, 1 shows the shell trajectory from the position A at an angle of forty-five degrees. Position B, being much

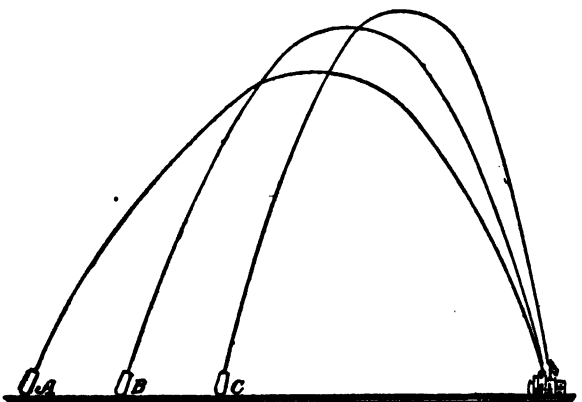


Fig. 5. Trajectory of Howitzer Shells.

nearer, the gun is pointed upwardly, so that the missile lands at the same place; and the nearest position, C, gives a very high trajectory."

"It seems to me that it would be a good

idea to use howitzers on board ships instead of the present long-range guns," remarked Jacques.

"So it would, were it not for the fact that to land a howitzer shell great accuracy is required, and the immobile character of a vessel would not enable gunners to score many hits."

As the afternoon advanced the shells from the enemy came with greater frequency, and before night it was not safe to remain exposed. In the mean time many devices had been resorted to by way of shelter. Advantage was taken of trees and brush, behind which temporary sheds were constructed, using old timber and wood, or a light frame would be arranged, sufficiently strong to support earth above, and this covering would protect one or two from fragments of shell.

Thus far there had been little rifle-firing. There was no danger in this respect. The artillery had not suffered, principally because the Germans had no opportunity to discover their whereabouts.

When the Germans began their first drive over the plains of Belgium the French mounted heavy guns on the high points, and

the enemy soon learned that if they scoured the high places with their shells they would be pretty sure to find a mark.

But experience taught them wisdom. Now they were placed in the depressions, and slightly behind the crest of the hill, instead of on or in advance of the sky-line; and engineers began to understand that placing them behind heavy brush, or where vegetation grew in profusion, simply served as a mark.

As a result the open was far safer, and, placed behind only the smallest clumps of shrubbery, offered the greatest protection. But now even this failed to prevent the enemy from detecting the emplacements.

The flying-machines of the enemy made their first appearance the following morning. Two of them hung over Soissons for an hour or more, and the boys watched them intently. Soon they were observed to come closer, but still too far away to be able to detect the two batteries where the boys lingered.

For more than an hour a French aeroplane had been hovering back and forth, high in the air, because during every manœuver little puffs could be seen below the machine, and sometimes dangerously close. Then it was

noticed to waver from side to side, and it darted down toward the lines, leaving a streak of white smoke behind it, almost like a comet's tail.

"It's on fire," said the lieutenant. "I think he can make it." The boys did not care for the shells. They ran out of the shelter, and all eyes were turned toward the sky-pilot, as he maintained control, and within three minutes the machine passed above them, not three hundred feet away, and struck the earth a thousand feet beyond.

Before it reached the earth the brave pilot jumped from his seat. Singular as it may seem, the machine was not much damaged, except that the tail and the chassis behind the aviator's seat were on fire; but, fortunately, a number of soldiers from the trenches, who were on hand with sand and bags, soon smothered the flames.

The machine struck the ground twenty feet in front of a trench, and the forward movement was so great that it glided over the trench and stopped nearly a hundred feet beyond. The lookout, who was in the extreme forward end of the body, was not injured, but the pilot was almost surrounded

by flames and feared that the moment the ship stopped the flames would shoot upward and envelop him.

Within a day the damaged part of the machine was repaired and a new set of wheels attached, and this was one of the machines which thereafter daily scouted above the lines until the battle of the Marne, where it engaged in one of the most spectacular battles of the air.

The German Taube came up within fifteen minutes of the catastrophe, followed by another. Before either arrived a curious, long-barreled gun was brought up and carefully placed in position. It was an anti-airship gun, specially designed to be swung to any angle up to the vertical, and this was now trained on the swiftly moving object.

The first shot was fired at an angle of ninety degrees, which is almost vertical. The ship went on nearly a half-mile behind the line, ever moving higher. Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes went by, and the lieutenant breathlessly held the glasses to his eyes.

They have not yet found us!" he exclaimed. Nevertheless, the shrapnel would occasionally fall near them. The shell-fire was merely

for the purpose of searching out the location of the attacking forces, and particularly the batteries.

Before the Taube ceased its manœuvering the lower line of trenches began to get a

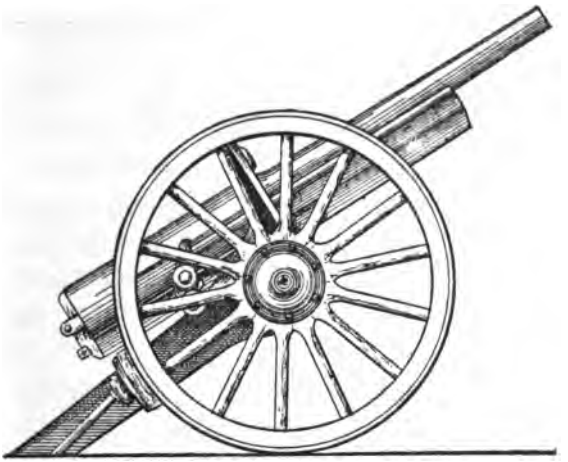


Fig. 5. A French Long-range Aeroplane Gun.

galling fire of shell, and then the second was attacked. Shortly before dark the whole hill was shrieking with the explosion of the shells, the spaces between the trenches being dotted with torn-up hillocks of earth.

The batteries kept up an incessant roar, the gunners loading and firing with a regularity that was appalling. Then, for some

reason, there was a lull in the rain of shells. The boys looked out and wondered.

The lieutenant saw and understood their questioning looks. "It means a charge. See, the men at the batteries are lowering the guns to rake the field beyond the first line of our trenches."

It was a fascinating game. Up to this time not a German soldier had been seen. All were fighting under cover. Guns were still booming, but no shells touched the hill. Along the edge of a little stream not a mile away the naked eye could see men forming; more and more of them came into view—two, three, four lines.

"That is their mass formation. See the second line behind the first?—that is the support. They will soon leave the cover of the woods. There, to the right, just over the hill, notice how that line is crawling forward; it will soon get the order to start on a run."

And thus the lieutenant commented, as the boys edged up closer.

"They seem to be moving awfully slow," said Jacques.

"But they are on the double quick," the lieutenant explained.

"Why don't our guns fire?" Jacques asked.

"Wait until they reach the point where the guns are trained for; then you will see some execution."

The lieutenant had hardly spoken when every gun in the battery to the left belched forth. This was seconded by the other battery; and now pandemonium broke loose. One battery after the other concentrated its fire on the green-gray lines which passed over the ridge and rushed the slight descent to the brook.

Just a little halt as the stream was reached. The guns were held up high, although the water was not waist-deep, and when the shore was reached the line reformed and began the first movement up the little incline.

Few, if any, fell by the wayside until after the brook was passed, and then gaps were made in the ranks at various places, and portions of the lines began to waver here and there. Puffs of smoke were in evidence everywhere directly ahead of the columns, and as they came nearer the lines began to move more slowly, and fall out of alinement.

The lieutenant stood beside the boys with his field-glasses, and commented on the scene

which they were permitted to witness under such favorable circumstances:

"The gunners have the range now; the second line is coming up. It will be impossible for them to live through that storm unless they can get to the first line of trenches."

"How many do you think are charging?"

"Probably two thousand in the first line, and double that number in the second. They have now reached the danger zone. The next fifteen minutes will decide whether or not they can make it."

Men were now falling in groups and singly all along the columns; it was a strange sight. The only thing which could be noted at this distance was the pall of white smoke which hung over the advancing men and the additional flashes which ended in adding more of the dark vapor to the mass.

There was but little wind to drive away the accumulations, and before long the troops were shut out by the steamlike vapor which seemed to follow them.

"It is too bad that the wind is blowing toward us. The aeroplanes are the only places from which to see the battle now," remarked the lieutenant.

"I can see them in spots," cried Jacques. "Look to the right, near the bridge. They are nearly up to it now."

"There must be a French battery near there," said Louis.

"Yes; two of them," answered the lieutenant.

"Why haven't they fired?" asked Jacques.

"It was placed there, in a concealed position, as a surprise. There, it has opened. See them falling back. Ah! that was a fine volley."

"The second line has crossed the river to the left!" shouted Jacques, in excitement.

"But the first line will never reach the trenches," said the lieutenant, quietly. They have been ordered to fall down. That is bad for them."

"Look at our soldiers going forward behind the hill to the left. What are they going to do?" asked Jacques, now wild with enthusiasm.

The lieutenant turned his glasses to get a better view. "It looks as though they were massing for a charge. Yes; there is the second regiment, behind the grove. They are off," he exclaimed, moving forward and

peering through the glasses in the intensity of his emotions.

The boys now witnessed the first real counter-charge of the war. It was a conflict in the open. Shrapnel was still falling, but the advance had halted. Through the open fields and over the slight descent the entire French column rushed.

The German line was still lying in its halted position, but the guns were sending missiles along the entire front. The charging column reached the most advanced trench, and halted for a moment, as though taking breath, until the second line behind was not more than fifty feet away, when they scrambled out of the ditches and crawled over the slight streak of earth, and like one man began the rush toward the Germans.

There was no shrapnel-fire now to hide the scene. The French were falling all along the line, but there was no halting, only here and there where more or less obstructions impeded their progress.

It did not appear to be more than fifty feet between the combatants now. The two lines were sure to overpower the invaders. Flesh and blood could not stand that terrific

rush. The Germans arose and fired a volley. Only for a moment did it seem to cause a waver in the movement, and then there was a perceptible movement to the rear.

In such a charge it is simply impossible for a long line to keep its alinement, so that in the mad forward rush some parts of the charging column reached the enemy ahead of the others. Two such wedges were plainly observed, and it had an important effect in this instance.

When the German officers gave the order to retire, or when, by force of the impetuous charge, the men saw that they had no hope to withstand the force of the blow, some of them lingered too long, and dozens of the tardy ones found themselves running side by side with the attacking troops.

When such was the case the only salvation was for them to throw down their arms, and there were always officers present who directed such men back into the French lines, where they became captives. Others, only slightly wounded, or injured in such a way that they could not follow their comrades in the retreat, were gathered in.

The attack at the bridge was repulsed.

The charge against the foe along the immediate front, as far as the boys could see, was a failure. The French held the trenches. But they had no orders to advance, and the men went back with their prisoners.

After seeking permission, the boys accompanied the lieutenant down the hill as far as the second trench, and met the prisoners who were rounded up along the road which ran over the hill.

As they passed by three hundred were counted. Many were wounded in the arms and body, all of those able to walk having slight flesh wounds. When the trench was reached the first real evidence of the battle came to view.

Red Cross wagons were already on the ground, and the stretcher-bearers were coming in with the wounded, French and Germans alike, all of whom were brought up and examined by the surgeons. It was a sad sight to notice the looks of the surgeons, sometimes sadly shaking their heads as the patients were examined, indicating no hope.

They were amazed at the appearance of the ground directly ahead of the second trench. It did not seem that there was a

square yard left untouched, as far as they could see across the field.

A half-hour after the defeat of the Germans, shrapnel again began to fall over that entire area, and it did not cease for the remainder of the day.

But the boys were jubilant. The French had won. The struggle of the Germans to reach Paris had been stopped, and they returned to headquarters with happy hearts, if such a thing as being happy on the battlefield is possible.

VI

IN THE TRENCHES AND ON THE FIRING-LINE

WHEN the boys awoke the next morning and looked out over the camp and beyond to the battery, hundreds of camp-wagons could be seen, all loaded and proceeding down the hill toward Compiègne.

"What does all this mean?" asked Jacques. "They are taking everything away."

"What, have the batteries gone?"

"I think not," he answered. "But they are loading up everything in sight."

This was, indeed, too true. The men in the temporary hospitals to the rear of the trenches on the crest were being carefully carried into the large vans which were filing up.

"We are going back to the large hill just east of Compiègne," said the lieutenant, as he came up, and the boys stood there in wonder at this unexpected turn of affairs.

"But we beat them yesterday, didn't we?" asked Louis.

"Yes; but we are fighting a rear-guard action, and are falling back and retarding them as much as possible. They must fight the battle on our chosen ground," he answered.

"Probably that is all right," murmured Jacques, "but I cannot understand it."

This was their busiest day thus far. All the camp equipage and officers' belongings were to be carried back, and the automobiles were busy every hour. There was some murmuring, but the officers seemed to be cheerful, and succeeded in imparting this feeling to the men.

The great stand would be made near Paris, on such lines as were even now ready, and every day meant more security for them when they once reached the fortified heights.

There was nothing which interested the boys so much as to see the business-like attitude of the surgeons and nurses attached to the hospitals, and after they had been established at the new headquarters, two miles east of Compiègne, they were frequent visitors, and were often requisitioned to bring things

to some of the patients, services which the officers at headquarters encouraged.

As a result the boys were always welcome, and sometimes, on their own account, would bring in delicacies to some they had known. Two days after the battle, as the boys were passing into the main room, they were hailed by a soldier who had a bandage about his head and one arm and one leg wrapped up.

"You don't remember me, I suppose. They hit me twice in the head, and I got two other shots, but I gave them some good ones in return."

Neither of the boys remembered him. He smiled, as he saw they did not recognize him.

"Don't you remember Taulbert?"

"How did you get into the fight?" almost gasped Louis. "I thought they wouldn't take you in the army?"

"That is what they said; but I fooled them. I was a teamster until the day before the fight at the river, and then I lost the team, and when the troops charged I picked up a gun and joined them. I tell you it was exciting for a little while; but I didn't mind it."

"Would you like to go through it again?" asked Louis.

"I wouldn't mind it a bit."

"Weren't you afraid when you started in on the charge?"

"Well, I did feel just a little queer. I suppose it was fear; but I have been trying ever since to just figure out how my mind acted."

"Do tell us about it," urged Jacques.

"I happened to get into the fight in this way. Do you remember the man I brought up to you at St.-Cloud?"

"Do you mean the man who is running machine No. H?"

"Yes; well, his brother was my most intimate friend; we were raised together, and before I reached my unhappy condition he and I had many pleasures in common. Two days before the battle I learned that he was a soldier in the regiment which made the charge the other day. Through him I had an opportunity to take part in the battle, but the only uniform I had was the army cap you see here."

It was evident from the coherent manner in which Taulbert recited his story that he was unusually well educated, and Jacques inquired, "You talk so well that you must have had a good education."

He hesitated before replying, "Yes; I was educated for the priesthood, and for some time I was an instructor in an educational institution, but—but that was a long time ago, and it doesn't matter now," and it was evident that he did not wish to give any more information on that point.

"I am awfully interested to know just how you felt when you were charging the Germans. How did it seem to affect your mind?"

"I was coming to that. For my part, I did not seem to feel or know anything. I could see with my ears, and could hear—well, I thought I heard—noises and rumbling; it was hard to distinguish; but I could see."

"Well, suppose some one had asked you what your feelings were while running forward and seeing your companions falling about you, what would you have said?" asked Louis.

"Ah! there, that is something I do not now comprehend. I cared more for my friend than for any other living man, and when I saw him fall I did not seem to be affected by it at all, but went on just the same."

"Didn't you think about stopping to try and help him?"

"No; not then; it did not occur to me that that was my duty. When we started from the trenches the officers told us that we would have to drive away the charging foe, and that is all I thought about, until we were ordered to fall back. The most trying time to all of us was when we reached the next to the last trench on the way to the charging Germans. The shrapnel shells were falling all around. To my right I saw a brave officer fully twenty paces ahead of the line. We were just getting ready to leap out and commence the run. That brave man walked back and forth, and cautioned calmness, and I admired him for his courage. Then my attention was distracted by something, and when I looked that way again the officer had disappeared, and I saw nothing but a cloud of smoke. A shrapnel shell had exploded ten feet in his front. Even that did not seem so terrible. It was the fact that we were lying there and being shot at without being able to return the fire. Some of the men that I looked at were twitching their rifles and nervously bringing them into the shooting position. I suppose I did the same. Trying as it was, and you may

believe it or not, but I even saw some men laughing. A corporal came up with an order and in his hurry to find an officer he slipped and fell into the trench. The accident caused some of the men to burst into merriment that sounded strange. I also thought it was amusing, and laughed. The corporal did not resent the jeers, but he blamed the shape of the side walls which were so treacherous, and that caused another roar at his expense."

"When were you shot?"

"I don't recall when I got the shot in the leg, nor did I have the least sensation when the first shot hit me in the head, just above the ear. It was a glancing shot, and cut the scalp for a distance of three inches or more."

"The first I knew about it was when we were ordered to fire, after the Germans began to run. Then I felt something sticky on the breech of my gun, and blood trickled through my cap and began to run over my cheek. The idea of being hit didn't alarm me at all; instead, I know that I smiled; at any rate, I felt that way."

"But I see you were hit in the right arm," added Jacques.

"Oh, that was a different thing. I was carrying the gun with my right hand, and felt something hit it a hard rap, and the gun was simply kicked out of my hand, and I looked around very much surprised. I stopped and turned to pick it up, for we were now running forward, but when I reached down for it my fingers simply would not take the gun, and then I knew."

"But how did you happen to get back to the lines?"

"I don't know; I suppose I simply walked back. I wasn't hurt very much—not as much as a great many of them."

The boys took the trouble to tell Lieutenant Breton about Taulbert, and that afternoon the colonel sent for the boys, and said, "What is this I hear about a friend of yours who was in the battle at the river?"

They did not, at first, understand to whom he alluded, but when the situation was explained, after some questioning, and the part that Taulbert had played made plain, he requested the boys to accompany him to the hospital, and the colonel in the kindest manner spoke to the unfortunate man, and requested information about his family, the

object of which was not at that time apparent to the boys.

After the colonel left, Taulbert waited for a sight of the boys, and as they were leaving called to them and said, "I must thank you for interesting yourselves so much in my behalf."

"We have not done anything that you need to thank us for. We told the lieutenant what you had done, and he spoke to the colonel about it, and the colonel seemed to be so pleased that he asked us to come here with him."

"Well, I don't think I have done anything to merit his approval and the steps he has taken to help my family."

"Why, what has he done?" asked Louis, in surprise.

"He said my family would be well taken care of, and for that reason he asked me all the particulars."

"Here is the lieutenant now," said Jacques as that officer came up and held out his hand to Taulbert.

"You have been commended for bravery on the field," he said, "and I want to congratulate you."

Taulbert smiled. "Well, it really doesn't seem to take much to be a hero. Why, that was merely a little adventure. The colonel seemed to make a great ado about it."

The lieutenant chuckled as he remarked, "I can commend you for trying to belittle the matter, but you were not in the ranks and under no obligation to go out and fight, but you have done your full duty to your country, and it is an officer's duty to recognize valor, not altogether out of compliment to you, but as an example to others."

There was now the utmost activity in the camp and in the field forces all around the height and along the roads which led to Compiègne. Aeroplanes were so numerous that it was difficult to distinguish the friendly ones from those of the Germans.

"The war has brought out various new types of machines, not known prior to this time, particularly among the Germans, but it is very easy to distinguish theirs from ours," explained the lieutenant.

"In what way?" asked Jacques.

"Here are several sketches which show the predominating feature between the Ger-

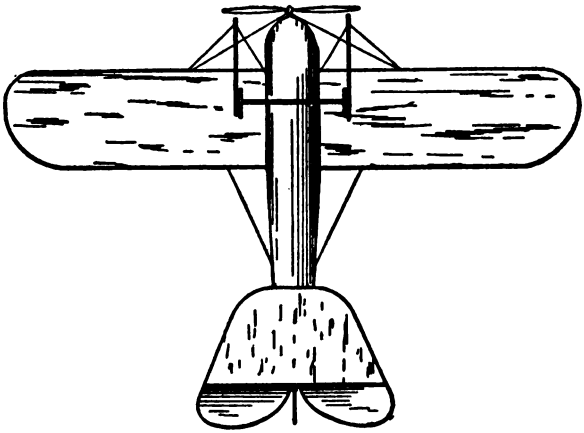


Fig. 6. French Monoplane (Allies).

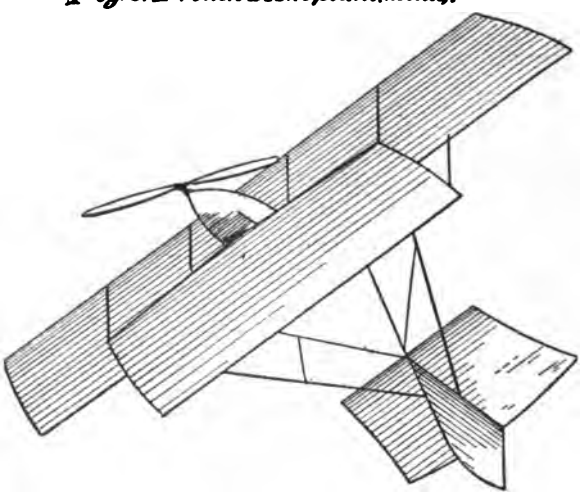


Fig. 7. Farman Biplane.

man and the Allies aeroplanes," replied the lieutenant, showing the boys a number of pictures. "The first sketch [Fig. 6] shows a side view, and also the appearance of the monoplane from beneath. You will see that the wings project at right angles from the chassis."

"Is that also true of the biplanes?" asked Jacques.

"Yes; the wings go out straight, as you will note from the second sketch [Fig. 7], the latter also being distinguished by having the lower planes shorter than the upper ones."

"But I see that that flier way over to the east, and which I am sure is a German machine, has the wings running out at right angles from the body," said Jacques.

"That is quite true," said the lieutenant, "but there is one thing which you must observe. The machine to which you allude is what is called the Stahl Taube, like this sketch [Fig. 8], and if closely examined you will observe that at the ends of the planes the wings project to the rear."

"What part do you refer to?" asked Jacques.

"The slightly spreading fan-shaped parts

which I have marked A," answered the lieutenant.

"But there is one which hasn't any rearwardly extending spread—the one that looks like a biplane," questioned Louis.

"That is a biplane," explained the lieutenant. "It is called the Aviatik [Fig. 9];

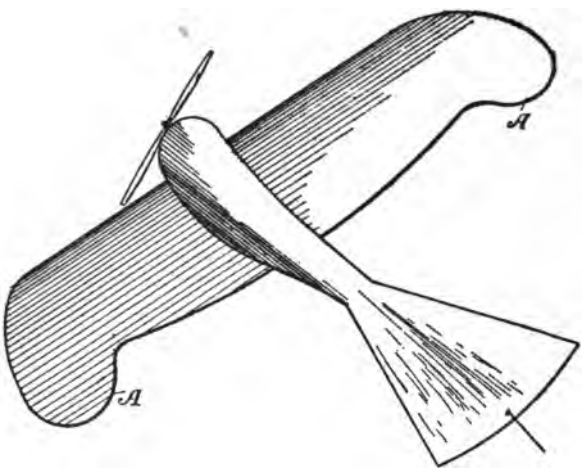


Fig. 8 Stahl Taube. (German).

but you will note that the wings do not extend at right angles from the body of the machine, but go back at a slight angle, so as to make it slightly A-shaped."

"That is the one I mean—the one now going to the north with a heart-shaped tail,"

remarked Louis. "It looks something like the Farman machine, except in the tail part."

"Yes," said the lieutenant, "the tail is also important to note. The Bristol biplane has a spade-shaped tail; the Auro biplane, used principally by the English, has two laterally projecting wings to serve as a tail; and the English Sopworth-tractor has a heart-shaped tail."

"But there is a Taube which has a different tail from the one you have just shown in the sketch," observed Jacques. "That one to the right, and now coming this way, has a swallow tail, whereas the Taube you sketched [Fig. 8] shows one something like an A, or triangular in form."

"I am glad you referred to that," replied the lieutenant. "It is a different machine. The Germans have two Taubes, one called the Stahl and the other the Rumpler. In all respects except the tail they are very much alike, so far as we are able to see them from the earth."

"I can now see the difference. I am glad to be able to know how to distinguish them. That biplane looks like a German machine,"

said Jacques, pointing to a machine far to the south.

"What makes you think so?" asked the lieutenant.

"Because it has two rounded portions which extend back at the ends of the planes," Jacques answered.

"That is correct," the lieutenant agreed, "and also for the reason that the wings do not project at exact right angles from the body. This sketch [Fig. 10] will make that plain, and you will also note that it has a triangular tail, just like the Stahl Taube."

"What is it called?" asked Jacques.

"The D. F. W. biplane."

The firing was heard all day at the heights on the hill which the Germans were now attacking, and the next morning another move was announced. This time they were to go directly south, and within an hour all bags and baggage were loaded, and five of the officers, in each of the machines piloted by the boys, were on the way, this time directly to the south.

Within a half-hour they passed through the village of Pierrefonds, nine miles east and

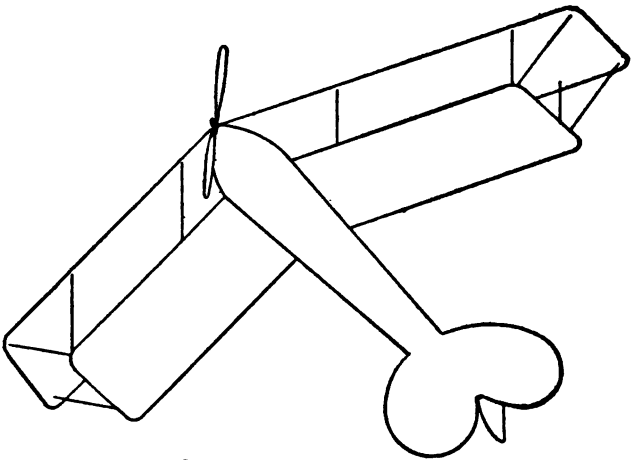


Fig. 9. Aviatik Biplane. (German).

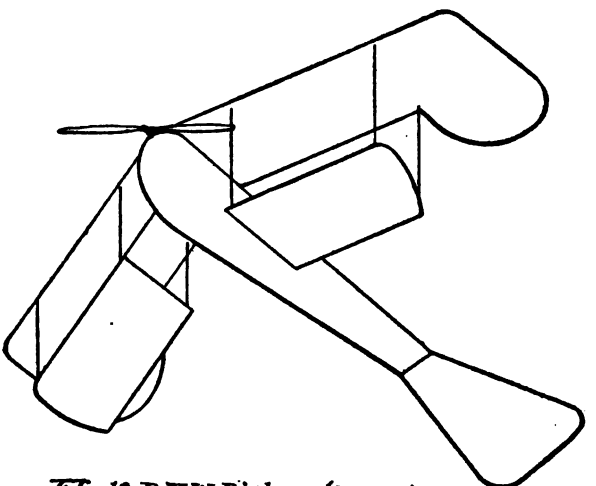


Fig. 10. D.F.W. Biplane. (German).

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south of Compiègne. To the right of the road, and on an imposing hill, was a castle which attracted Louis's attention, and he called the lieutenant's notice to it.

"That is one of the largest castles in France," explained the lieutenant. "It was built in 1390, by the Duke of Orléans, and completely restored by Napoleon III. It has eight great cylindrical cone-shaped roofs on towers each a hundred feet high."

Without stopping, they went on directly southeast, where it was reported that a new army had taken position along the line of the railway, the shifting of the forces thus to the south and east being made necessary because of the arrival of large English reinforcements which came in north of Compiègne the day before.

An hour afterward, while ascending a pronounced elevation which overlooked a great plain to the east, the lieutenant said: "Here the first Napoleon fought one of his battles while on the way to the historic field of Waterloo. It is worthy of note that all through this section he met the combined English and German forces before meeting his final defeat, and now we have the English

for our allies, and, so far as France is concerned, we are fighting the same foe."

"What is the name of the village which we just passed through?" asked Louis.

"It is called Villers-Cotterets," replied the lieutenant.

As they proceeded along the heights for more than two miles, the sounds of firing increased; and when they had the first view of the great plain beyond, the first thing that attracted their attention was an immense column of smoke.

The machines stopped and the officers adjusted their field-glasses. It was a village on the Marne, twenty-five miles west of Rheims. It was the first bit of vandalism which they had been permitted to see. Possibly it was a military necessity, but it seemed an unnecessary act of cruelty to render the poor people homeless.

The railroad showed evidences of the great burden it was carrying, and the roads from the west were completely congested with the newly arriving troops and ammunition-vans.

Automobiles by the hundreds were coming in from the south and west, all with forces,

the men singing and making a constant uproar. Returning, they carried wounded men, who were brought from the firing-line five miles beyond.

On every hill and vantage-point—alongside of hedges, in front of wooded sections, and in every conceivable location—men were engaged in throwing up earthworks. At particular points were depressed places, smoothed off, which were intended to serve as positions for batteries.

That this was done with such systematic calculation, so far from the real fighting zone, was what astonished the boys more than anything else. It was to them the strongest evidence that the fighting game at this stage was one of slow and measured retreat.

Jacques was particularly alert, and questioned the captain who sat by his side. In response to his queries the captain said: "Every mile we can add to the distance that the Germans must transport their reinforcements and their supplies is an advantage to us. Nearer the city we shall have those things in abundance; and, furthermore, when war was declared Germany had her entire

army ready to march, whereas France had not called her men to the colors; hence every day brings us nearer the same degree of preparedness that the Germans exhibited at the start."

VII

THE UHLANS AND ARMORED CARS

THROUGHOUT all this portion of France, and it may be so said of almost every part of the Continent, the roads do not run regularly through the territory. They follow the conformation of the country, or dart in and out in a most bewildering way.

This is the case with all of them, except, possibly, in the case of the great highways which connect the larger towns and cities. This is not so throughout the United States, for the reason that almost everywhere here the country was settled after the government had made the surveys. These surveys provided that the country should be divided into checker-board squares, one mile in each block, thus comprising six hundred and forty acres to such a *section*, as it is called.

All over Europe the roads were made for purposes of convenience only, and unless

a traveler has a guide, or is equipped with a good road map, and knows how to use the map, he will find himself crossing his own path very frequently.

Most of the roads in the section of the country where the boys now found themselves were made two thousand years ago. Some of the old Roman roads still exist, and all highways so made were famous arteries of travel, and are singularly serviceable even at the present time, because of the remarkable manner in which the road-bed was originally prepared.

There is one thing, however, which in a measure makes up for this lack of irregularity to the strange traveler who has an observant eye. Many of these roadways have rows of trees which distinguish them from the ordinary trees or landmarks, so that in traveling through the country along one of the highways the irregular roads may be noted.

For this reason a stranger in a country so distinguished will sometimes come across a road with no trees, probably a newly cut passage made necessary by a new division of land or for some other reason, and then

identification is hard, and he is apt to go astray, even with the guide-map before him.

In many instances of this kind the Germans found themselves at a loss in the charge through France, for, although they had the most complete set of maps of every section, many of them were at fault, to their undoing in several cases, as we shall have occasion to note.

We have stated that the command to which the boys were attached had been shifted to the east along the battle-front, which brought them directly west of Rheims, and the Germans had already occupied that city when they reached the position they were to intrench and defend.

Their objective was a position a little east of the village of Fère-en-Tardenois, on the heights above a stream which forms the head-waters of the river Ourcq. To gain that point the machines were diverted to the east above Oulchy-le-Château.

Eight machines formed the outfit for the staff and equipment, and were going along at a lively rate when, without warning, they were confronted by a force of Uhlans, which, to their surprise, came upon them unex-

pectedly. Accompanying the machines were several armored motor-cars, one of which was ahead, and the others following.

The Germans concluded to make a *coup*, and waited until the armored car ahead had gone by before they made the attack, unconscious of the presence of the armored cars behind. That was their undoing. But before the trailing cars had time to come up three of the machines had badly punctured tires from the well-directed shots, and three of the officers were wounded.

The machine-guns on the cars behind created havoc with the squad of Uhlans, and when the first car turned and came back they were almost annihilated. From one of the wounded officers it was learned that the road on which they had gone was one of those "blind" byways which led nowhere, and they had mistaken this for one of the marked ones indicated on the map.

Jacques's car had the front and rear tires riddled, and, the supply of inner tubes being sadly lacking, it had to be towed to a little village which was observed in the distance, where it was left, to be recovered later.

A place was made for him in Louis's car,

and Jacques said: "That fight was worth the loss of the car. It was something awful while it lasted. They couldn't talk back to the machine-guns."

The officers laughed at this unique way of putting it. But they now knew that the enemy was near, and the machines were pushed forward at the utmost speed. The pace was too much for one of the cars, and at an obstruction a front wheel buckled, and the third machine was thus rendered useless.

The remaining machines were now crowded with officers, and it was found necessary to take off some of the camp equipment to lighten them, and travel was considerably impeded. To add to the complexity of the situation, the rear axle of Louis's machine gave way in the middle of a shallow stream when a wheel struck a stone, and all had to get out and wade ashore.

The colonel quickly came to a decision. He selected the officers who were to accompany him in the remaining cars, and those remaining were to be brought up as soon as transportation could be provided. It was found that the scene of the accident was

sufficiently far from the German lines to assure them of safety.

The day before a little rain had fallen, not enough to make very bad roads, and during the entire day clouds were passing, but now, shortly after the colonel left, it began to rain, and they took refuge in the machines, putting up the tops and adjusting the rain-curtains.

For over two hours the rain poured in torrents. It was fun at first, but soon the stream began to swell, and the waters splashed into the bodies of the cars and rose higher and higher. Two of the machines with the other man were on the shore, and the waters even reached them, and there was now a scurrying about on the part of those occupying the damaged machine in the stream.

This was something not provided for in the programme. Something must be done. If the rain continued, as appeared likely, the water would certainly be high enough to wash the machine down-stream. Indeed, that is just what was happening while they were debating.

The chauffeur of the first wrecked car was prompt enough to open the seat and bring out a rope, such as is generally used for tow-

ing, and, after securing it to the machine, divested himself of his coat, and was quick to jump overboard in the effort to reach shore.

The moment he left the car, the latter, lightened by just that much, commenced to move, and the current was so swift that, although the chauffeur was an expert swimmer, he was swept downward, and had not the wit of those on shore been brought into play he would have been lost.

The chauffeur on the bank also secured a rope, which he tied around his body, and jumped in, his companions holding the end of the rope and running down-stream until they reached the chauffeur, the car meanwhile having turned completely around, and the boys and two of the officers were struggling in the water while they clung to the car.

It was impossible to save the machine. For the moment it was temporarily halted, and the men rescued by means of the ropes; then it moved away and overturned. As soon as the rushing waters caught the top it was pushed along with the force of the current and stranded a quarter of a mile below.

The heavy rain, which continued until past

five o'clock that evening, prevented the relief machines from coming up. Indeed, it was found impossible, in the congested condition of things, to get a machine that evening, but shortly before dark several cyclists belonging to a corps which had just come in from Paris arrived, and advised the men to make their way as best they could to the village, about two miles beyond, where accommodations and food might be had.

It was an awful tramp through the mud, but the boys enjoyed the trip on account of its novelty. Both were now out of machines. What to do in this event was what puzzled them. As they were walking back Jacques said:

"Why not ask the colonel to let us have wheels? I would like to join the cycle corps."

"Suits me exactly; but it was a nice thing to be at headquarters," responded Louis.

"Quite true," agreed Jacques; "but I would prefer the cycle brigade to a berth in the city. Maybe they won't let us stay here unless we can do something."

It had not occurred to Louis that such might be the contingency. "Let us ask the lieutenant as soon as we get in."

Both machines were now beyond redemption. The boys wanted a job, and as near the battle zone as possible; that is what they were determined to fight for. Somehow the danger didn't seem to be so great. They had seen the conflict at close range for only a little over a week.

The next morning, after waiting until nearly ten o'clock, the transportation came, and they were glad to be at home again with the officers at headquarters.

They did not waste any time after arriving before the lieutenant was hunted up. He laughed at their experiences, and told them that this was a part of the war game. They looked like veterans now, their clothes muddy, and torn as well. Their boots and leggings were simply caked with dried clay, and Louis said his clothes were growing fast to his skin.

"You see we had no chance to take off our clothes," said Jacques, "and the trip through the mud made us perspire so much that it wouldn't have done any good to dry them out before we started."

"Well, didn't you have a room at the village?" the lieutenant inquired.

"Room?" retorted Jacques; "Louis and I

slept in a grocery-store, on top of the counter, and with nothing but potato-sacks for pillows. We didn't need any covers. We dried out better without any covering."

"Why didn't you take off your clothes and hang them up to dry until morning?" asked the lieutenant, as he laughed at the description of the place.

"What—and use the coarse sacks for sheets?" objected Jacques. "Well, that didn't suit me. I preferred my clothes, wet as they were."

"Now, Lieutenant, we want you to do us a favor," said Jacques.

"Well, what is it?" This was the first time the boys had ever made a request. The lieutenant's eyes looked up smilingly. He felt sure that they wanted to man some new machines.

But Jacques replied, "We should like to join the bicycle corps, and, if we can't do that, why couldn't we have cycles for use as messengers at headquarters, or anything else—"

"Or anything that will keep you at the front," suggested the lieutenant, as he noticed their eagerness.

"Of course!" Louis replied. "What do we want to go back to Paris for, when there is so much to do here, and many things we can do better than men, or just as well?"

"I shall see the general about it to-day," promised the lieutenant. "I do not know what the regulations are with the corps which arrived yesterday. You see, that is not a part of the regular service. It is something which has been lately organized, partly as a private enterprise, and there may be some rule or regulation which will prevent you from joining."

"Thank you very much," said Louis. "We will be on hand whenever needed."

Both boys had ridden bicycles since early youth, so that it would be very natural for them to take up this work; and as both were tall and well developed, they had strong hopes that something of that kind would turn up in their favor.

During the entire day they were anxious to find out what was necessary to join, and when the lieutenant, later in the afternoon, called, it was with genuine sorrow that he had to report the impossibility of getting them into the corps, since it was recruited from

the experts, and contained many of the noted cyclists of the world, even having in its list well-known racers from three of the neutral countries.

"Too bad," remarked the lieutenant. "But I have arranged for two wheels, which will get here within a day or two, and you are still attached to headquarters, and are on the pay-roll, just the same."

"Pay-roll!" exclaimed Louis. "Who put us on the pay-roll?"

"I suppose you did," replied the lieutenant, with mocking sincerity. "Are you doing this just for fun? If you are in the service, you will be paid, just like every one else."

They looked at each other and commenced to laugh. Neither had ever earned a dollar before. That was too good to keep.

"I must write to mother and tell her about this," exclaimed Louis.

Jacques reflected a moment. "I would do so, too, but I am afraid she would not get it," and a look of sadness overspread his features, which the lieutenant noticed.

"Where is she?" he inquired.

"At Mézières."

"They are not in any danger," he said, consolingly.

Two days afterward the boys were cheered by the announcement that two wheels were available, and, on appearing at the storehouse, were delighted to notice that the crates bore their names. It turned out that they were of the pattern known as the military type, very strongly made, and they were not slow in taking possession and reporting to the commanding officer.

From the headquarters two roads ran to the east, which were parallel, or nearly so, for a mile, one of which led direct to Rheims, and the other took a southerly trend and branched off to the right toward the village of Dorman, on the Marne.

As they were starting out for a trial spin the lieutenant hailed them: "Before you leave you should be provided with the service maps and learn to be guided by them."

"Is it such a difficult matter?" inquired Jacques.

"Reading maps is like everything else; it must be studied."

They laughed at the idea that reading a map involved any particular qualifications.

"Very well," the lieutenant remarked. "Let us go over and get a couple of them, and we may have an examination right at the start."

Each map section is conveniently prepared in a little case, together with a larger map giving an entire department—or county, as we call it—or state, in which the particular map section is numbered, so that a glance will show just how the part in which you are traveling fits.

"Now, find the place where we are located," said the lieutenant.

The boys peered over the section map and soon found the village and the road.

"Here it is!" cried Jacques. "This is the road which goes to Rheims. And here is another road going—going—" He stopped for a moment and glanced about. "Yes, this road goes north," and he looked at the lieutenant with a smile.

"Are you quite sure about that? In which direction is Rheims?"

"Why—out on this road," Jacques answered. "See, this road leads almost straight toward it; and the other road is along the right side of it."

"But I want to know whether Rheims is to the east or to the west of where we are standing."

"To the east, of course," replied Jacques.

"Very well; then how can the parallel road to which you refer run to the north?"

"Well, it seems to go that way," and Jacques pointed to the north.

"I see the trouble, Jacques," said Louis. "You are holding the map wrong."

"Holding the map wrong? Is there anything in that?" Jacques asked.

The lieutenant explained: "It seemed to be wrong from the description you gave of the directions. The map says 'North' at the top, and 'South' at the bottom. There is an object in that. It is not only to show how the map is located on the sheet on which it is printed, but also to indicate the position in which you are to hold the map when examining it."

"Oh yes! If the sun is shining it is easy to find out north and south, but if the sun isn't shining it might be hard to get at that," suggested Louis.

"In that event," explained the lieutenant, "you must depend on observation. That is

one of the first things a scout must be efficient in. Observation, the capacity to notice the little things and turn them to account, is of the first importance when traveling in a strange country."

"Then the map must be turned around in the proper way," said Jacques, suiting the action to the word. "That makes the road run south, instead of north."

"That is perfectly correct," the lieutenant agreed. "Now I am going to give you an order. I want you to take the road to the south and go four kilometers, and then turn to the right on the road which runs due north and south, and stop when you have gone one kilometer along that road. Let me see you locate the spot."

This was a problem. The boys had no trouble in following the road, and they traced it with a pencil.

"It is about here," indicated Louis with a pencil.

"You have gone out the wrong road, and are not within a mile and a half of the place," the lieutenant asserted. "You failed to deliver the order, and now there will be trouble."

"But if I happened to be on the road I could tell pretty nearly when I got to the cross-road," Louis replied.

"That might be so, but it would not answer the purpose. Do you know what your trouble is?" asked the lieutenant.

"No," Louis answered.

"You forgot to compare distances—to measure lengths with your eye," explained the lieutenant.

"That is something I never thought of," Louis admitted.

"Every map has a scale of distances," and the lieutenant indicated it in the corner of the map. "That means that for every inch it is a kilometer, or it may be, as in this map, which is on a large scale, two inches for every kilometer."[1]

"So if we go a half-kilometer it is the same as an inch?" Jacques asked.

"Yes," the lieutenant admitted.

"But if we didn't get that proportion of the map and the distance traveled exactly right, we might make a mistake," Louis suggested.

"That is true. When a route is given you,

[1] A kilometer is equal to 3,281 feet, omitting fractions.

your first duty is to commit the route to memory," the lieutenant told them.

The boys laughed at this seemingly absurd thing. "How commit it to memory? How can you commit distances to memory?" asked Jacques when the laughter had ceased.

"Very easily," the lieutenant explained. "Fix in your mind just how long an inch is on the road. You will find that easy to accomplish. But that is, after all, not the most essential thing to observe."

"And is there still something more?" Jacques wanted to know.

"Yes," continued the lieutenant, "the really important feature is to see what the map tells you about the road. Now let us examine it in detail. The road goes over a hill; see, it is shown here. Then there is a road which goes to the north, and probably connects with the road going to Rheims. As you go along an inch farther the map says there is a grove at the north side, and a farm-house with red outbuildings. After the farm-house has been passed you cross a small stream, over a stone bridge; you can surely remember that. And a quarter of an inch beyond is another farm-house. Then

we pass a blacksmith-shop on the right side of the road and near the cross-road."

"This is getting interesting," said Jacques. "I could learn that in short order."

"Why, certainly," encouraged the lieutenant; "all you must know is what to know and how to acquire it."

"Well, who ever thought there was so much in a map!" exclaimed Louis.

VIII

SCOUTING WITH A MAP

THE boys took the maps over to their quarters and traced out a course.

"Suppose we take the route indicated by the lieutenant," suggested Louis. "After the blacksmith-shop—let us see; here it is. The shop, and then these cross-marks. The lieutenant didn't say what that was for."

"It tells down in the corner," remarked Jacques, leaning over. "'*Open fields.* The heavy zigzag line is a *fence*, and the close dots are *trees*.' Well, this is too easy."

"He said four kilometers. I wonder how near I can come to it? Two inches is about that long," and Louis held his thumb and finger apart the distance as it appeared to him.

"Here," said Jacques, "put it down on this mark—that gives the measure exactly. There; *too long!* That is a little deceptive. Try it yourself."

"Yes," Louis admitted, "I have also guessed it too long. We must do better than that!"

Now you may imagine just what delight these boys found in going over the map, planning the route, and learning all about it in anticipation of trying it out in practice.

Just try it for yourself. It will give you one of the most practical lessons in observation that it is possible to conceive. It will show you the necessity of keeping several things in mind, all of which are related to one another, just the same as committing prose or poetry to memory.

Sometimes a line or a phrase is forgotten, and occasionally an entire sentence will be distorted. The more intelligent the mind the more perfect will be the absorption of the ideas involved, because any little lapses in the recital will immediately be detected and an effort made to correct or add the missing links.

Then, again, practice in committing to memory is a most vital thing to assure correctness. To those who are not accustomed to it, memorizing is a difficult feat. This grows easier only when an effort is made to

understand the sense of the sentences and their connection with one another.

The writer well remembers what a task it was to first acquire the habit of memorizing; it was a burden until he learned that half of the task consisted in getting at the sense of the words and phrases.

Now this is what makes the scout such a valuable factor as he travels over new ground. He must put intelligence into his work. A mile means nothing except so much space to be covered. A hill is only a portion of the country a little higher than the surrounding places. A stream flows to the right or to the left. All that is commonplace.

But the shrewd observer will interpret these thing to his advantage. General Grant was once placed in a position where he knew the enemy was near, but in what particular direction it was impossible to learn, because in those days there were no maps such as military commanders now possess.

Beyond was a hill. He noted the direction of the crest. Off on the left was another hill. There was nothing unusual about that, either. The only thing he knew was that a river was

in the front somewhere, and none of the scouts had reported it.

If there is anything which commanding officers are more partial to than anything else, it is bridges. The hill beyond extended in the same direction as the one nearest his position; observation with his glasses revealed the fact that its sides were too precipitous to make it a desirable route for a road; and, furthermore, it was not likely that the road would go up over such a hill in order to get to the river.

It did not seem conceivable that a bridge would be built across a river at a point where there would be a long hill on both sides, and he also concluded that the river would be deeper along that part of its course where there were high hills on the two sides, and the probability of a safe fording-place would be more likely at that part of the stream where the approaches were flat, if it should turn out that there was no bridge at that particular place.

His calculations were correct. A bridge was found at the place indicated, and he directed his forces there before the Confederates could reach it.

It would not have been possible to find two more earnest students learning the art of deciphering maps and understanding map lore than these enthusiasts. They put problems to each other, and soon became adept in discovering mistakes and correcting errors of distance, directions, and in deciphering the hieroglyphics with which the map abounded. Now they were ready for the first adventure.

"Don't go too far on the first trip," shouted the lieutenant, as they sallied forth; and they waved their hands in salute while turning into the road.

"This must be the hill on the map," said Jacques. "I am sure of that, because here is the road to the left."

They went on in silence, critically examining the signs. "Yonder is the grove and the farm-house. Just as plain as anything can be. I wonder if we can make it without looking at the map?" asked Louis.

The blacksmith-shop came into sight, as indicated, not far beyond the cross-road, then there was a slight turn to the south, and the road wound around a hill. Beyond was another little stream, with a bridge, and the

road again straightened out for nearly an inch—that is, on the map.

A house was located at the turn of the road, which now stretched out to the southeast, and then came the second road which branched off to the south. On the left side of the road was a long stretch of vineyards, and on the other side newly plowed fields; then came the border of a forest, and a beautifully carpeted green which stretched up a hill, where a fine mansion nestled among the trees and looked most inviting.

"I think we have gone fully three inches," remarked Louis; and both boys laughed at the amusing idea of traveling by inches; but there it was on the map, and that had told the truth so far.

"Do you recall what we shall come to next?" asked Jacques.

Louis pondered for a while, but pedaled on. "I am getting somewhat mixed now. The lesson was pretty long for the first trial. But never mind, the road to the south is somewhere near at hand. I am sure of that."

And so they went on for fully another kilometer, passing a road which branched out on the left side and ran due east.

"Ah, here it is!" almost shouted Jacques. "I remember now. This is the road I had forgotten. It is very close to the road that the lieutenant indicated, which goes to the right."

"Why, can't you see it beyond? The double row of poplars must be the place," exclaimed Louis.

Such, indeed, was the fact. From that place this highway ran directly south and crossed the Marne by one of the large bridges.

"Now we are at the end of the map," said Louis. "Suppose we stop and look it up before going farther." Dismounting, they were soon assured of the road by the existence of the bridge, which was duly indicated.

"I am tired enough for a little rest," Jacques said. "I wish we had brought luncheon along."

"Why not hunt up a village?" suggested Louis.

"Just the thing," assented Jacques. "Now let us get the map placed properly. Here is the road we are on, and the bridge is down this way."

"Over here is a village. See it?" Louis asked. "Follow the road back that comes right up to the one we are on."

"That is a half-inch farther along. Come on; I'm hungry," and Jacques mounted his wheel and set off with a rush.

There was the road which led to the east, and the houses began to spring up closer and closer, and soon a little straggling hamlet lay before them.

As they wheeled in there was an apparent excitement in the town. People were huddled together, and the boys' appearance, with their trim uniforms and natty caps, was a cause of added excitement to the people.

"I wonder what is up?" questioned Jacques, and he slowed down and turned his wheel toward a small group who were eying them with open eyes and mouths.

"What is the matter with the people?" he asked.

"The Uhlans are coming up the road," he was told.

The boys jumped from their wheels. An elderly man hurriedly crossed the street. "Are you from our army?" he questioned, hurriedly.

"Yes," responded Louis. "How far are they away?"

"They are too near for you to get away from

them," the man replied. "That man in the sweater, with the wheel, has just come in with the news."

They mounted their wheels and spurted across to the place where the motley crowd surrounded the messenger. "Tell us," shouted Jacques, "how far away they are. We are scouts from the army, and we must report them."

The man with the sweater rushed toward the boys and said: "They must not know you are here. Come here, Pierre; hide these boys quickly or they will be taken. No, no; not in the store. Find a place for them in the cellar."

"But they will get our wheels. They have the government stamp on them, and that will tell them we are here," said Louis, as the man addressed beckoned to them.

"We will get them out of the way; simply take care of yourselves; that is the first thing to do."

The boys did not need a second bidding, for as they turned a young man rushed past the corner store and shouted that the horsemen were turning the corner at Thierry's.

"How far is that from here?" asked Jacques.

"Not half a kilometer," the young man answered, as he opened a trap-door at the rear of the building and walked down the steps.

"I will get a candle for you," he said as he ascended the steps and closed the door.

"Well, here we are in a trap!" whispered Louis. "The Uhlans weren't on the map," and he laughed loud enough to make Jacques notice his attempt at jollity, for it was too dark to see much.

The building was situated on the corner, and the only light was a small window, near the front end, entirely covered with cobwebs, and to this they immediately made their way, and, taking advantage of the boxes, were able to witness what went on outside.

While thus engaged, the trap-door was opened and, to their delight, the wheels were lowered down the steps, and Louis jumped from his box and ran over.

"They are entering the village now," said the man with the sweater. "We will try and steer them off, if possible. This is a new experience to us, and we don't know what will happen. The door was quickly closed, and then opened again for an instant as the

man peered through and hurriedly whispered: "Be sure and hide the wheels; do that the first thing. I will try to keep you informed. Good luck!"

"Thank you very much," said Louis.

Jacques made a hurried trip to the rear, where Louis was moving the wheels. "They are coming; listen to the horses."

Their tramp was plainly heard. "I wonder how many there are," Louis said.

"Come help me with the wheels first," Jacques demanded. "We must get them away from the door, at any rate. There must be a big troop of them."

The wheels were hidden behind some boxes, and a few others were piled up in front, temporarily, for the boys were too much excited to think about anything now but the Uhlans.

Then the boxes were again mounted, and not fifty feet away were thirty of the dreaded foe, with their peculiar helmets, and the lances which distinguished the Germans from many of their own troopers.

Jacques understood German, but not sufficiently well to converse fluently. However, what he knew stood them in good stead now,

and enabled him to understand the course of the conversation.

The officer asked for the chief magistrate of the village, and when he appeared they were surprised to recognize the elderly man who first addressed them.

"How near are the French forces?" was the first question.

"I do not know, sir," the old man answered.

The officer glared at him for a moment, and then repeated the question more sternly than before, to which he gave the same reply. At a word from the officer two of the troopers ranged themselves alongside of the old man, and the officer said, "You are under arrest; you will be taught not to deceive us."

"I am willing to submit to your orders, but you cannot compel me to give you information when I have none," and the old man looked at the officer like a brave man.

"I want food for my men and horses," said the officer.

"That we can provide," was the answer.

"It is not conceivable that you, an officer of this commune, should be so ignorant as to be unaware of the proximity of your forces."

"I have told you the truth," was the re-

sponse; "but if I knew I would not tell you."

The boys danced with delight at this brave answer, but they were trembling at the fate of the man who dared utter such words.

The officer glared, and with an impatient gesture shouted out, "So you defy me, do you?"

"I am standing on my rights, sir. I am an old soldier, and I fought your people forty-four years ago; they were gentlemen, then; I believed you to be one, although an enemy."

The stern look on the officer's face relaxed. It was evident that the keen thrust had its effect. "You are right," he answered. "You will understand that we sometimes are compelled to adopt seemingly harsh tones and appearances. I commend you for your bravery."

"I thank you," responded the old man. "It is only the brave who can appreciate that quality in others."

This compliment was immediately acknowledged by the officer, as he continued to address the magistrate in a more kindly tone.

While the food was being prepared, one-

half of the men were detached, for purposes which the boys could not at that time understand; two of the men, together with the officer, dismounted, and the latter drew out a map and consulted for a full quarter of an hour.

IX

TRAPPED, AND THE ESCAPE

IT was now past one o'clock, and the boys were simply starving, but to move from their prison-pen was out of the question. One-half of the men had left for some duty, while the others remained and were feeding their horses.

"They have a map," whispered Jacques, "and the officer is pointing out in the direction of the road we came in on. Then he swings his arm around to the north. Now, I wonder if the fellows who left have gone up the road—here, let us look at the map. I am sure of it now. See, here is a road which goes north from this place."

"I think one part are scouting, while the others are feeding," remarked Louis.

"If that is the case, it will mean a long stay for us here," answered Jacques.

"One thing is certain. We must get away

from this place as soon as possible," urged Louis. "I am in for making a run of it. If they get too close we can leave the wheels and take to the fields. Wouldn't it be fun to report the enemy on our first adventure!"

It was unspeakably tiring to stand on the boxes and await events. Only three or four of the troopers were in view of the boys through the little window. A half-dozen of the Uhlans were posted about the village, to guard against any surprise, and it was long after two in the afternoon before the tramp of horses was heard, as a squad of cavalry returned and another squad disappeared. The incoming horsemen then ate their luncheon and provided fodder for the horses.

Shortly after three they could hear the second squad come in, and, from appearances, they intended to make a night of it. One after the other, however, disappeared from the space in the square which the boys could view, and soon the trap-door was raised and a voice called them.

They leaped from the boxes and met the white-haired man who had so neatly rebuked the officer.

"They have departed, and we have taken

the precaution to set guards in the direction they have gone, so there will be no surprise. It will not, however, be safe for you to attempt to get back, as another force may be coming up," he said.

"Why do you think others are coming up?" asked Jacques.

"They have sent back two men, undoubtedly for the purpose of reporting," the old man answered.

"But we must get back at once," said Louis. "It is our duty to report them in this place."

"By all means," added Jacques. "We must go if it is necessary to cross the fields on foot."

"I like that spirit," responded the old man. "I only regret that we are unable to send any messages by telephone."

"Why not?" Louis asked.

"Because the wires were cut over three hours ago," the old man explained.

"Were they cut to the west of this place?" asked Jacques.

"No," the old man answered, "but to the north and to the south. We have no line running west; so that in order to reach the lines we have had to telephone to the next

village to the north, which is in direct connection with the road coming from Rheims."

"Yet we must go," Jacques insisted; "but we are awfully hungry. We really came over here to get something to eat."

"That you shall have, by all means," the old man assured them. "Come at once. Pierre, see that the wheels are brought over to the house at once."

The villagers followed the boys admiringly, commenting on their trim appearance and commending them for their determination.

"Come with us, Theobald," said the old man, addressing the man with the sweater. "You may be able to help us out."

Theobald, as the boys soon learned, was the local repairer for the telephone lines in that section, and it was while on a trip to learn the cause of the interrupted wires that he came across the approaching Uhlans, which was the salvation of the boys, because without the alarm thus given the cavalry would have been in the village before they could have been secreted.

The luncheon was quickly prepared, and the boys devoured it with a relish. Now for the next step. Theobald inquired as to the

location of their forces, and then considered as to the probable course which the Uhlans would take.

"Did they go out this road directly to the west?" asked Louis.

"Yes," Theobald replied, "and that will compel them to go either to the north, and thus strike the road which runs west from Rheims, or to the south and cross the river. Now, there is no road which parallels the Rheims road to the west, unless you go south and strike one which is on the north side of the Marne, and two kilometers beyond is another road to the north which might be taken."

"Well," said Jacques, "here is our map. We must read it on that to show us the way."

"I will go with you, and start you along the river road," said Theobald. "It seems to be your only hope—unless—unless they have turned to the south."

The map was now before them, and they keenly studied the route, noting the particular features by the way, and commenting on them, to the delight of the old man.

"I remember the last war," he said. "We had no such provisions for finding places and directing our courses. Then we sent out

scouts, who scrutinized the country, and we were dependent on them. But things have greatly improved since then. I am informed that for years the Germans have had maps of this kind which show every mile of the way from the eastern border of France to Paris, and I have no doubt but the whole of France is so laid out. This is also true of Belgium."

Theobald ran across the street and brought out his wheel, and with the good wishes of the people the three sallied forth to the west, following the course taken by the troopers less than an hour before.

When the main road to the bridge was reached Theobald dismounted and examined the tracks of the troops. "They have gone to the north; that is good. Now let us make time and reach the lower road near the bridge."

Within fifteen minutes the road was in sight, but what was their dismay at seeing a cloud of dust far beyond, which indicated a troop of horsemen.

"That can't be the same lot of men, surely," said Theobald. "Don't let us waste time. We must make the road and go on without stopping."

"But suppose it is our own cavalry?" said Jacques. "I don't think we can afford to take any chances."

"I know a good hiding-place a kilometer beyond," Theobald assured the boys. "We can dismount there."

The place was reached before the troops came to their road, and then, to their consternation, the horsemen followed them.

"Quick, now!" exclaimed Theobald; "get the wheels over the fence and follow the hedge. There is a thick clump over there; it will enable us to see who they are."

The cavalry came on rapidly, and before they were half-way from the turn it was evident that they were Germans, who finally rode by at the same rapid gait. The boys looked at each other and at Theobald.

"No; they are not the same ones," he suggested, as Jacques was about to frame a question.

"So there are two lots of the fellows; well, we are in another trap," deplored Louis.

"Now what shall we do?" queried Jacques.

Theobald reflected. Neither of the boys was ready with a solution. The map was again brought out. It offered no particular

hope, but it was a sort of diversion in a dilemma.

"Let me tell you what to do," said Jacques as he folded the map. "We must follow them up. It is our only safety."

"But suppose they come back?" Theobald asked.

"I don't think they will do that," Jacques replied. "As long as it is daylight we can always keep them so far ahead, and it will certainly take us nearer our lines."

Theobald hesitatingly assented, as that was better than to remain or to go back, and because, he remarked, the magistrate of the village suggested the possibility of other troops being on the way to follow the lead of the scouts.

"I will go with you to the road which runs to the north," he remarked, and the boys thanked him for the service he had rendered.

To their surprise the troop turned to the south at the juncture of the road from the north, and, hastily bidding their companion good-by, they pedaled to the north as rapidly as possible.

Hardly had they gone a kilometer when the dust ahead indicated troops. They

stopped, this time in the greatest alarm. The dust ceased as they pulled their wheels over the fence and hastily drew them into a shelter of weeds which grew around the corner of the field.

A careful investigation showed them that the troops were stopping at a farm-house, which accounted for the disappearance of the dust.

Jacques drew the map from his pocket. The excitement and the diversion from the course which they had laid out had disconcerted them. They studied it feverishly, and meantime peered out to see what the enemy were doing.

Jacques suddenly started, and almost spoke aloud: "Why, this must be the second cross-road from our lines. If we can only get across these fields we will be safe on the next road; and now is the time to go."

Louis grasped his wheel, and together they kept under cover as much as possible, pushing their wheels by their side, until the fence at the opposite side was reached, when they again mounted, and, although it was rough going, they could make greater speed than by walking.

A half-hour's struggle finally brought them to a double line of trees, which they hailed with joy, and it did not take a half-minute to get the wheels over and on the way north, surprised to find that they were only a short distance from the blacksmith-shop which was one of the things so particularly noted on the map.

They pushed on, and not a thousand feet from the blacksmith-shop they saw another cloud of dust.

The wheels were stopped as though they were paralyzed. "I wonder if we are going to meet all of them to-day?" asked Louis.

"Hurrah!" shrieked Jacques. "It is a troop of our Hussars."

The pedals now worked overtime. They went on frantically. The Hussars drew up, and Jacques jumped from his machine as he cried, "The Uhlans are on the second road to the right!"

The Hussars were plainly astonished. "Are you sure?" inquired an officer.

"Yes," Jacques replied, "and there is another band of them down near the river."

"Thank you for the information," said the officer, as he gave the command to go forward on the double-quick.

What an intense sigh of relief was uttered by the boys as they saw the horsemen disappear! At five o'clock they wheeled up to headquarters, tired beyond measure. They did not know until they dropped from their wheels that they were so nearly exhausted.

There was some surprise when they went up to the general's tent and notified the corporal that they wished to make a report to the commander. They were instantly admitted.

The story was soon told, and the general commended them for their bravery and the signal service they had performed under the circumstances. The lieutenant spied them as they were retiring from the officer's quarters.

"We have been worrying about you for the last four hours," he said. "Where have you been?"

"Scouting, and found some things not on the map," replied Louis.

"What is that?" asked the lieutenant.

"Uhlans," answered Louis.

The lieutenant laughed. "Where? And what did you do with them?" he inquired, jestingly.

"We sent the Hussars after them," Louis replied.

The lieutenant burst into a roar of laughter, and men and officers crowded around.

The boys told their story with great glee. Among the listeners were several members of the special bicycle corps referred to in a previous chapter. It was a little galling for them to hear the tale of these boys, who had so cleverly taken the honors in discovering the first Uhlans when there was a whole corps of famous riders in the camp.

They could not get away from the anxious questioners. They were tired, but that made no difference to those about them, and, while thus engaged in recounting their experiences, a troop of Hussars rode up with a dozen disarmed Uhlans in their midst.

"Well, if there isn't the officer that stood outside of our cellar window in the village where they trapped us!" exclaimed Jacques.

Inquiry soon developed the fact that the prisoners were a part of that squad, and it was, no doubt, the troop which the boys saw before they began the journey through the fields.

The next morning the lieutenant came over

the first thing, and as he entered the room he said, smilingly, "I think you can join the bicycle corps."

The boys jumped to their feet in glee. "How do you know?" asked Jacques.

"I heard the captain say, after the interview you had with the men, that you would be first-class recruits."

Jacques looked up rather dubiously as he questioned the lieutenant. "I don't know whether we want to join. We want your opinion."

"For my part," replied the lieutenant, "if I had anything to say about it, under the conditions, I would join, if I wanted excitement and a lively time; but headquarters-work is the best position, because it is not so risky."

The boys hesitated and looked at each other for a time without responding. Finally, Jacques ventured the opinion that this was a step which required careful consideration, and that it would be well to wait another day before making their decision.

"That is well," said the lieutenant. "It would compel you to be under very close discipline, and that might be irksome. In

the mean time you might learn what the regulations are and whether you can comply with them. You know what your present duties are, but from this time forward it may be more strenuous than in the past."

The boys noticed that during their absence a great deal of work had been done in the preparations for defense. Long lines of earthworks had been thrown up and were being manned. The Germans were well to the west of Rheims, but reports were conflicting.

The Hussars which the boys met were the first troop that had advanced far beyond the outer line. As the work of the French was purely defensive, there was not such urgent need for scouting as was required on the part of the invaders, and their energy was directed toward locating the most effective ground for resisting the advance.

Four lines of trenches were being constructed, most of them following the contour of the hills, so that at many places the defenders were able to send forth enfilading fires as the enemy approached.

During the whole of the following day the boys were kept busy transmitting orders to

the incoming teams and to the officers commanding the newly arrived troops.

To dispose of forces is one of the hard problems of a commander. It does not mean only the manning of trenches, but consideration must be had to the kind of troops best adapted for certain positions, and the qualities of the officers commanding the different sections is, frequently, of far more significance than the men themselves.

Then, in modern-day fighting, it is of the utmost value to be able to locate the batteries so that they will be likely to co-operate effectively with the infantry. This necessitates the utmost skill in the disposition of a defending force.

Behind each unit must be arranged the ammunition trains and carriers, and the hospital forces and vans, with the stretcher-bearers. The commissary department, that most vital of all adjuncts, must be so arranged that the men can be quickly and amply supplied, for food is of as much importance as ammunition—in fact, far more essential in order to keep up the stamina of the soldiers.

All this required constant vigilance on the part of the staff, and all orders had to be

carried to the new arrivals by messengers; the duty was one which demanded most intelligent effort, particularly when all was, as at first, in great confusion, and locations were not defined except in a most general way.

X

TRENCHES AND MODERN WARFARE

THE last great conflict developed many new features in the methods of warfare. In the olden times such a thing as providing protection for the fighting forces was unknown.

It was the custom to mass men together, either for attack or for defense. This grew out of the old Roman style of warfare, which was developed to a remarkable degree of perfection.

The Grecian phalanx was one of the first attempts of a body of men to hew down opposition or to stand up against a superior force. The original unit of a phalanx comprised four thousand men arranged in the form of a square.

Afterward, Philip of Macedonia doubled the number and later quadrupled it, so that it formed a square which could not be successfully attacked.

In the Macedonian phalanx the men stood close together, sometimes with their shields locked, and with the forward lines having their spears projecting—the front rank with spears close to the ground, the second rank with the spear-points higher up, and the third rank with spear-points still higher—thus presenting to the oncoming enemy a bristling thicket which inspired fear.

Even when charged by elephants, as in some of the earlier battles under Alexander, the heavy spears, with their rear ends planted in the ground, would impale the animals and cause them to turn and stampede, thus causing more damage to the charging foe than to the Greeks.

The introduction of firearms changed this tactical arrangement, because bullets go farther than arrows or spears and pierce the strongest armor, even with the poorly constructed weapons originally made.

Nevertheless, the great tacticians Frederick the Great and Napoleon used the mass formation, as it is called, and the latter adopted that form in his last famous charge, when the Guard made the final attempt to check the German onslaught under Blücher at Waterloo.

As late as the War of 1812, between the United States and Great Britain, the powder made was so poor in quality that the fighting-lines had to be very near each other to do any execution. Men-of-war had to fight so close together that the men could shout across the intervening space.

Then came the vast improvement in powder, increasing its power over ten times, and the rifling of the guns, which insured greater accuracy, and finally the quick-firers, or machine-guns, which enabled one man to fire a hundred bullets more effectively than a hundred men could shoot, however expert they might be.

These things gradually did away with the close formation, and the new tactics require what is called the *open* order, supplemented by the *digging-in* method, which requires the soldier to throw himself flat on the earth, and with a short spade, specially provided, to dig out a little furrow, throwing up the earth in front, so as to make a sort of parapet.

In action a man so equipped can make a cover for himself in a few minutes. Then at a signal, he arises and springs forward, repeating the process, and in this way a force is

able to steal close to a battery or other force, and if followed by sufficient men, who are thus able to creep along practically safe from harm, the first line will soon be in position for a charge over the intervening space.

The only thing which the advancing force need to fear is shrapnel. But even this is a negligible quantity when near the opposing force, because the gunners dare not shoot when the enemy come too close to their lines, for fear of striking their own men.

The lieutenant carefully explained these military matters to the boys as they accompanied him on his tour of inspection on the second day after the adventure which is related in the preceding chapter.

"Why do they make so many different kinds of trenches?" asked Jacques.

"That is a matter of convenience," the lieutenant replied, "and frequently one design is found more efficient than another, dependent on the location or in the uses required of it, and more often than otherwise the officers, and even the men, improve the original types."

"What is the most common form of trench?" inquired Louis.

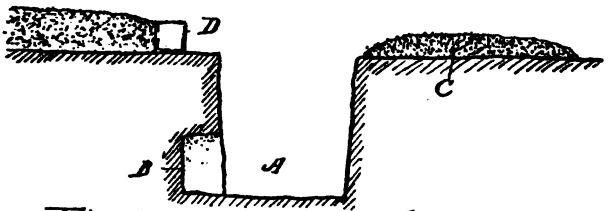


Fig. 11. Ordinary French Trench

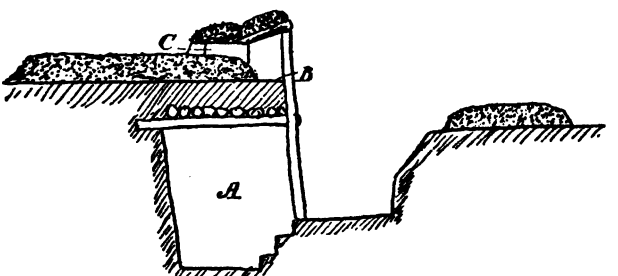


Fig. 12 Bomb-Proof Shelter.

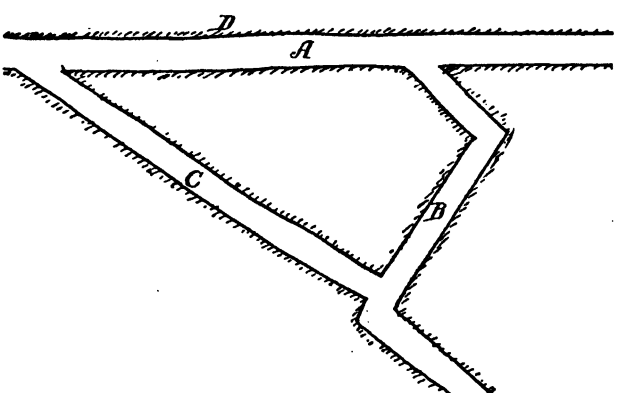


Fig. 13. Leads to the Trenches.

The lieutenant, showing the boys a number of plans of trenches, replied: "We have in our army this form, which is most frequently used. This sketch [Fig. 11] represents a trench, A, from three and a half to four feet deep, with little cavities, B, dug out in the wall facing the enemy, which are individual shelters, in which men can rest or be protected from exploding shells."

"But I see that the earth from the trenches is thrown up to the rear side of the ditch, as well as in front," Jacques remarked.

"The dirt, C," the lieutenant explained, "to the rear is a protection against backfire. Six or eight inches forward of the front wall is a row of biscuit-tins, D, filled with earth or bits of wood, so as to form a sort of embankment for the earth piled up in front, and this provides a ledge on which the arms rest while firing."

"I see that some of them have big holes in the walls," observed Jacques.

"Those are regular bomb-proof shelters," resumed the lieutenant. "The ones I have just described are for individual protection, but they are made like this sketch [Fig. 12], with a large recess, A, the ceiling of which is

supported by wooden beams or limbs of trees."

"What is that above?" asked Louis.

"That," the lieutenant replied, "is the sand-bag protection, which has loopholes, C, between, through which the guns are placed. Sometimes the men make benches, which are merely ledges, as at B, for comfort, and in cold weather canvas is stretched over the openings of these shelter-tents to keep out the wind."

"They would be very comfortable in those places with a fire," Louis surmised, "and I suppose they could rig up fireplaces."

"But fires would not be permitted, on account of the smoke," the lieutenant reminded him.

"I had forgotten that," said Louis. "But what is the object of having these ditches which connect the trenches made so crooked?"

"You refer to the approaches?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes," Louis replied.

"That is to enable the men to go from one trench to another without being exposed to the fire of the enemy," the lieutenant told him. "Examine this sketch [Fig. 13] and it

will show you what I mean. The main line," he continued, "is indicated by A. The approach, B, may have several branches, as at C, leading to different parts of the trench A."

"I see it now," admitted Louis. "Suppose a charge should be made, and a soldier reaches, say, D, he could not fire along the trench, because it is so crooked."

"Yes; that is one reason," agreed the lieutenant. "The other is, that shrapnel shell, fired at a low trajectory, would be likely to enfilade a straight ditch, but when the ditch is made in this way it would burst over one section only, and thus cause comparatively little damage."

"Some of them, I notice, have two ditches running close together, side by side. What are they for?" asked Jacques.

"That is only a modification of the branching leads," explained the lieutenant. "This sketch [Fig. 14] is what is called a traversed shelter trench. The main trench may be made more or less irregular, instead of in a straight line. At intervals are shelter places as indicated at A. These trenches are usually made wide, comparatively, so as to afford protection to a large number of men, and

are usually made at critical places in the line. Under certain circumstances it would not be wise to have the men move back and forth in the main trench, so a second line, B, or *traverse*, as it is called, which is a very

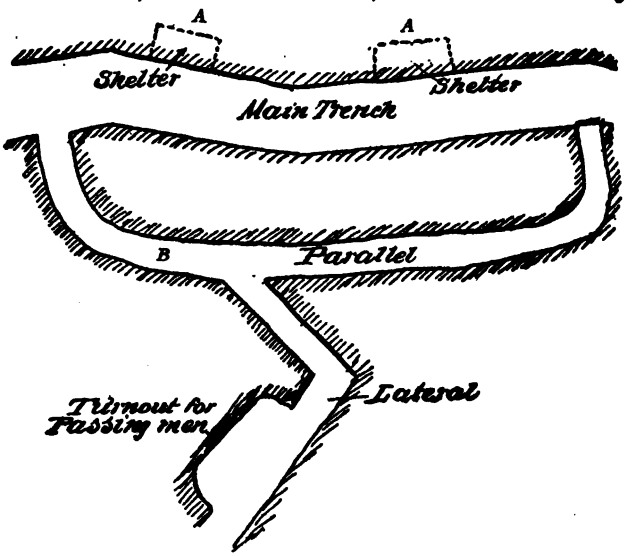


Fig. 14. Traverses and Laterals.

narrow trench, is dug parallel with the main ditch and to the rear of it, say, eight or ten feet, or even more."

"These traverses, then, are the ones which communicate with the leads," Jacques explained, after which the lieutenant left the

boys, whose discussion of the subject was long continued.

During the day reports began to come in at intervals about the doings of the German forces. The trenches were ready for their reception. The boys had made up their minds to remain in the headquarters service, but in the mean time, now that the arduous work of carrying despatches had lessened, they were keen for adventure.

The bicycle corps attracted them, it must be admitted, and on two occasions, after the first day of off duty, they accompanied the various parties who patrolled the eastern and southern fronts.

In such companies there are always daredevils who care more for excitement than anything else. They are called soldiers of fortune, and the strength of such men lies in the audacity of their adventures.

On the third trip they were with a dozen of the picked men who were ordered to go down in the vicinity of the river. From the crest of a little hill they had a fine view of the undulating plain to the southeast.

From this vantage-point they could see two roads—one below the hill and extending

in an irregular course to the river in the south, the other coming from the east and joining the first-named road two miles below.

The leader, Harold Kane, a scout of some prominence in the Boer War, scented an adventure. To the north of where the two roads joined were two companies of Germans, fully a mile away, marching along and singing lustily.

With the glasses the main German forces could be seen to the east, nearly three miles beyond. This was plainly indicated by the wagon-trains, and by the fact that the little strips of road where the trees were not too thick were filled with troops, looking like tiny ant-trains, coming up to the west.

Kane halted his little company and turned to them with the following suggestion: "We might as well take a hand with those fellows."

This was, indeed, a surprising proposition, considering that there were only fourteen, by actual count, whereas the Germans below numbered fully two hundred.

"I know you think this a foolhardy adventure," Kane declared, "but after you have had some experience you will learn that the

boldness of any enterprise is what counts, not the numbers engaged."

One more venturesome than the rest asked for particulars, and the response was as follows: "The road we are on leads down to the road on which they are marching. A half-mile below is another road which parallels this, also leading down to the one they are on. I will take half of the men and run down and take up position to head them off; the others will go to the lower road and find shelter there. When they come up we will give them a volley, which must be followed up by a volley from the party in the rear. This will indicate that they have been ambushed or their retreat intercepted."

"But suppose they put up a fight?" one asked.

"In that case," Kane replied, "we have the means to get away much faster than they can follow us. All who are willing to join say so, as there is not much time to lose."

Every one assented, and the boys, with hearts in their mouths, were, nevertheless, eager for the affray. Kane selected the two parties, and to the gratification of the boys he indicated that they should accompany him.

Radcliffe, a tall, wiry fellow, a chum of Kane's, was selected to lead the other party, and they separated. Kane put on speed, and they coasted down the hill at a terrific rate; and as the trees and brush protected them from observation, they reached the road before the marchers were half-way along the stretch between the cross-roads.

"Now, boys," exclaimed Kane, "line up the wheels at this place, so that each man will know just where to find his wheel in case of emergency. That will do. Face the wheels the other way. We may not have time to turn them. Follow me, and when we reach the turn in the road beyond, three will take up position on the other side of the road and await my orders."

They marched forward, not more than a hundred feet, and stopped at the turn. The three designated crossed to the left side, while Kane, with the two boys and another man, crouched behind the corner.

The singing continued until the foremost marchers were within three hundred feet, when Kane quietly said, "All ready!" The carbines had been unstrapped and in waiting. "When I give the word, fire."

"One, two, three—*fire!*" The effect was most startling. The Germans were marching along, quite unconcerned, in irregular column, and this sudden onslaught might well be calculated to create confusion.

"Give them another!" shouted Kane, and the second volley had hardly died away before the boys heard a volley from the south, where Radcliff and his men were stationed. With an audacity unparalleled, Kane stepped out and shouted out a demand for their surrender, just as the men were stepping back so as to form a front from which they could fire.

"Our forces are in front and rear, and you cannot get away!" shouted Kane when he saw the confusion in their ranks.

The shots from the rear told the story too plainly. An officer stepped to the front of the line and held up a handkerchief.

"Line up on the side of the road, in sight," said Kane to his squad, in an undertone. The men did so, and stood with their weapons in a menacing attitude.

"Throw down your arms and advance in column of fours," ordered Kane.

The German officer turned and gave the order. The weapons dropped.

"Hold up your hands!" demanded Kane in an imperious voice.

The hands went up, and in that order they slowly marched by; and it was an intense relief to the boys when they saw Radcliffe's men coming along the road like demons and cheering as though there were a thousand men in line.

No sooner had the column marched past than the Germans saw the trick and began the most vehement cursing and upbraiding imaginable. "Take them out the first road to the right, and deliver the prisoners to the second regiment," commanded the intrepid Kane.

The men could hardly restrain themselves at the ridiculous character of the order. There was not a regiment within two miles. Now the hazard of this enterprise will be better understood when it is stated that the prisoners had more revolvers than all the captors carried, and a concerted action on their part would have meant death to the entire bicycle squad.

Appreciating this, Kane ordered that if any man lowered his hands for an instant it would mean his death. "Keep your guns

cocked and ready for instant use," was his instruction to his men.

"What was the object in making them march up in column of fours?" asked Jacques, as Radcliffe came alongside.

"It would have made such a long column that we should have had trouble in guarding them," he replied. "They discovered the trick too late to create trouble for us."

"Were you in sight when we fired the first volley?" Jacques asked.

"Yes," Radcliffe responded, "but we got a big scare just after you fired the first volley."

"What was that?" asked Jacques.

"We thought a troop of cavalry was coming up," Radcliffe answered; "that was why we hesitated about firing immediately after your volley. But when you fired the second shot, and they didn't reply, we knew you had them, and we gave them the volley."

After a mile of traveling Kane gave the command to halt, in German. "Open order!" and the men spread out so that they were more than two paces apart.

"You may rest! Take down your hands!" he ordered.

Did you ever walk a mile with your hands

extended above your head? An experience of this kind will show you why Kane had this consideration for the men.

During the rest the commanding officer held quite a conversation with Kane, and Jacques then learned that Kane understood the German drill to perfection; and while the capture was a most humiliating one, the captured officer was graceful enough to commend Kane for the brilliant manner in which it was conceived and carried out.

In due time the captives were delivered to the commanding officer. It was a curious sight to see two hundred and fifteen men, including officers, marched along ahead of fourteen bicycle-riders. The first one to hail them as they marched by was the lieutenant, whose eyes opened wide when he saw who the participants were.

They could not reach their quarters quickly enough, knowing that Breton would be there, and they had the pleasure of bringing Kane with them.

The latter was loud in his praise of the bravery of the boys in this their first adventure with the *Boches*, as the French delighted to call their enemies.

The lieutenant shook Kane's hand, warmly congratulating him, and together they went to see the general. The latter had been informed of the exploit, and slyly shook his head at the boys.

"You *will* keep in trouble of some kind," he said. "This business will be getting very stale for you unless you can have one adventure a day. I am afraid we shall lose your services at headquarters now?"

"Oh no," Louis assured him; "but things were a little dull here, and we went along just for the experience."

The general laughed and turned to Kane. "This matter will be mentioned in a special report. How many men have you taken?"

"Two hundred and fifteen," Kane answered.

"File your report with the command," the general ordered.

"Thank you," replied Kane. "It will be ready before night."

"You will also include the names of all who participated," the general continued.

"I will do so," promised Kane.

"The very boldness of the enterprise is what made it a success," the general ex-

plained. "I suppose that the Germans reasoned in this way: An inferior force would not have attempted the capture of such a body of men, hence surrender is the only alternative."

"But without the force in the rear they would have annihilated us," suggested Kane.

"Yes," the general agreed, "that was the strong factor in settling the matter of a superior force. It is one of the axioms of strategy not to separate an inferior force in the presence of a superior one. But your exploit brings out very forcibly the weakness of fighting in accordance with established rules."

"That was well exemplified by Napoleon," remarked the lieutenant.

"Quite true," admitted the general. "In his campaign in Italy, which was the first time he really had an independent command, he defeated three of the most eminent Austrian generals, in the open field, because he adopted tactics so contrary to the rules of fighting that they were completely surprised."

XI

AIDING THE WOUNDED, AND THE RETREAT

A RETREATING fight is one not apt to keep up the spirits of men. They want to be victorious, and often forget that to make a masterly retreat is frequently as important as a victory.

In a little over two weeks' time the German forces had pushed back the combined French and English lines a distance, approximately, of fifty miles. Sometimes they would make a spurt at places and cover ten miles, and then on other days the trenches and the strongly fortified places would hold them an entire day.

In the old style of fighting, one such victory as the Germans had won would have meant a precipitous retreat, a flight, or a rout. Now, with the trenches, the facilities for rapidly handling troops, the means for noting the movements of large columns by means of

the aeroplanes, all combined to make a retreat one day the signal for another stopping-place of defense the next day.

Unquestionably, the Germans could have been stopped before they reached Rheims, if it had been thought wise to do so by the French commander. As it was, the movement through France was like the swing of a giant wing, the fixed point being at Verdun, within fifteen miles of the French-German frontier, and the outer arc describing a path which passed through Lille, at the Belgian border, and came down through Amiens and Beauvais.

From Rheims to the height held by the brigade with which the boys were connected was twenty-five miles. Determined opposition was met at Rheims, and this gave an opportunity for the preparation of the strong defenses there.

Now they were in sight, and the batteries began their music. It was a cannonade lasting the entire day, and toward evening came the inevitable charge.

It was a hand-to-hand fight, but the Germans carried only one of the trenches, and the loss was enormous, because they had

to advance against concealed works, and often, when they neared the goal, a concealed battery would mow them down and compel them to retire.

The evening of this first day's battle was a busy one for the hospital corps. Every one was impressed into the service to care for the wounded. The boys were on hand, as usual, wherever work was required.

It did not now seem so gruesome to them. The sense of duty overcame many a qualm, but before they were through with the night's work Louis became too ill to continue, and the physicians advised Jacques to conduct him back.

The van was loaded with wounded. What was more in demand during the trip back than anything else was water. These vans are provided with this in abundance, and the cups were constantly in use.

"Why is it that wounded men crave water so much?" asked Jacques, as the surgeon leaned back to get a little rest.

"The wound causes fever to set in," he replied, "and the natural desire for water follows. The same thing happens with men who are in the trenches and engaged in fight-

ing. Their mouths feel parched, their tongues become dry, and their lips feverish. It is the intense excitement which brings on this condition."

"Do you suppose it is fear?" asked Jacques.

"Generally not," the surgeon answered. "At first they may have such a feeling, but that soon wears away, and they do the work mechanically. Their whole being becomes absorbed with the things they see and hear. No, I am satisfied that the majority of men, after they are once in the fray, are not afraid."

Louis was very ill when the ambulance came to a halt, and he was carried in and laid on a cot in the temporary hospital which had been prepared beneath a large shed.

The surgeons examined him in turn, and told Jacques that he would be all right after a night's sleep. In the early morning Jacques was on hand, and, approaching, saw that he was still sleeping, but looked rosy, and this relieved the boy.

As he was turning away a hand caught him by the coat. "What are you doing here?" said a voice which sounded strangely familiar. Only the eyes and a part of the

side of a face were visible, and Jacques stooped down.

The patient tried to smile. "Do you know me?"

"No; your voice sounds familiar, but you have on a good mask," replied Jacques.

"How are your lessons?" the unknown patient asked.

"Oh! I know you now!" Jacques exclaimed. "It is Dad Hubert—I mean Captain. When were you wounded?"

"No apologies are necessary," Captain Hubert told him. "I was in the fight yesterday. But what are you doing here? Where is Louis?"

"In the cot by your side," and Jacques pointed to him.

The captain started with surprise. "And is he wounded, too?"

"No; but we were helping the wounded last night, and he became very sick; he is not hurt," Jacques assured him.

"Poor fellow! How I sympathize with him! I don't blame him for becoming ill. It was a terrible time. There, he is moving now. Louis!" said the captain, in a gentle voice.

The boy opened his eyes and looked about, and then caught sight of Jacques and sprang from his couch. The nurse jumped forward.

"I am not hurt," Louis declared. "Did you call me? I dreamed that Dad Hubert called me."

"So he did," responded the captain, and Jacques smiled as he saw the surprised look on Louis's face.

"And you here, too?" he murmured. "I

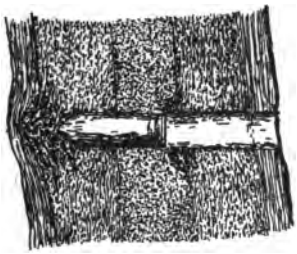


Fig 15 Action of Bullet passing through Bone.

dreamed about you two or three times during the night, and you were in trouble every time."

"Well, I was," the captain replied. "They performed two operations on me, owing to bullet wounds in my leg, and the surgeons mentioned my name several times, and I suppose you must have heard them. That must have caused your dream."

The nurse motioned to Jacques that he should not excite the captain at that time, and, after Louis had leaned over and spoken words of encouragement, both left and immediately went to their quarters.

Louis could not account for his illness, and the lieutenant, who called during the day, assured Jacques that his condition was not at all alarming. "You know he is of a very sensitive temperament, and human nature is capable of standing just so much and no more. He was, no doubt, worn out with the fatigue of the day, and the trying labors of the night broke down his physical endurance, so that his nerves gave way completely."

Before the afternoon he was as well as ever and ready for any duty. The boys called at the hospital, and were delighted to learn that Dad had recovered from the operations and was beyond all danger.

"Where was he hurt?" Jacques asked a surgeon.

"He was struck in the head by a shrapnel shell, or rather by the small fragments, so that the left side of his face is in a badly shattered condition," the surgeon explained. "Another part of the shell badly injured his

left arm, and he was shot in the leg besides, so that he was very weak from loss of blood when we found him, and we could not give him immediate attention. Later in the night, however, he revived, and we fixed him up in good shape."

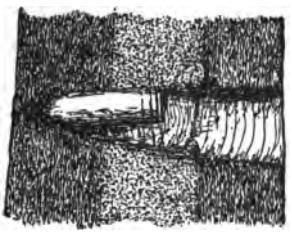


Fig. 16. Key-holing Action of Bullet.

The boys were cheered at the intelligence that the Germans had retreated to their second line of trenches, and, as the ambulance was going down the hill, the boys hung on and soon entered the edge of a stretch of woodland which was over an area where the last fighting had been done. The approach of night and the close proximity of the enemy prevented the hospital corps from entering the grove during the previous evening or during the night, and here the boys had the first sight of *first aid* to the injured.

One of the men wounded was a surgeon. All of the soldiers are provided with a little kit containing antiseptic cotton, septic solutions, and tincture of iodine. The surgeon, although unable to make his way to the open field, and still having the instincts of his profession, that he must aid the suffering, went from one to the other, and did his part toward relieving the wounded.

"What is that dark spot around each wound?" asked Louis.

"Tincture of iodine," the surgeon told him.

"What is the object of painting it around the wound?" Louis inquired.

"To prevent infection and to provide a counter-irritant," he was told. "This is how a surgeon gives the wounded attention. After cutting away the clothing, he takes the bottle containing peroxide of hydrogen, and, with the camel's-hair brush attached to the inner end of the cork, washes the wound thoroughly, and then dries it with absorbent cotton."

"But this bottle says *dioxygen*," Louis declared.

"That is the same thing," explained the surgeon. "Water is simply two parts of

hydrogen and one part of oxygen. What is called peroxide of hydrogen, or dioxygen, is composed of two parts of hydrogen and *two* parts of oxygen. Then, after thoroughly destroying the infectious germs, it is painted with the tincture of iodine, which gives it that brown color."

"But what is the object of painting the outside with the tincture?" inquired Louis.

"It is used as a counter-irritant," he was told. "First aid is designed to prevent two things—first, to keep the wound free from germs; and, second, to arrest bleeding, or hemorrhage, as it is called by physicians."

"But if an artery is cut it is pretty hard to stop the flow of blood, isn't it?" Louis asked.

"The arteries bring the blood from the heart, and the veins convey it back," he was told; "for that reason the pumping action of the heart causes a strong flow from a ruptured artery. This always can be checked by tying a bandage tightly around the limb between the wound and the heart. Here is a man with a ruptured artery of the leg. See, the bandage is still there, although it is now relaxed, because the blood-clots have stopped the flow."

"Can you tell whether or not the artery is cut by anything except the flow?" Louis inquired.

"That is the first thing to be observed," the surgeon answered. "If the blood is bright red, it shows blood that has not yet done its work in the system, and is a sure sign that it has come direct from the heart."

"But suppose an artery should be cut in the body where it isn't possible to put a bandage on, as you suggested, how can the flow be stopped?" Louis asked.

"In that case," he was told, "the pressure should be exerted directly over the wound with the cotton or sterile dressing."

"I noticed," said Louis, "that many of the wounded are subject to considerable vomiting shortly after they are hit, and why I noticed it particularly was that this happened with one of the men who was wounded in the leg. I can understand why this might happen if he should be hit in the body, because it might tend to disturb the stomach, and this would account for it."

"That is due to *shock*," the surgeon explained. "The disturbance of the nervous system by a severe wound causes great mental

and bodily depression. The patient becomes pale; the surface of the body cold and clammy; the pulse grows irregular and weak, so that the beating cannot be detected at times; breathing becomes irregular and shallow, accompanied by sighing; and nausea and vomiting frequently follow."

"What should be done in such cases?" Louis asked.

"Put the patient on his back and administer some stimulant, and where it is possible apply warm blankets or hot-water bags. This matter of shocks to the human system has become a special study with physicians, as they now recognize that in many cases it is not the danger arising from injury to one of the vital organs, but to the physical disturbance which has deranged the system for the time being."

The surgeon worked while he talked, and showed how many of the minor aids were given to those who had not been cared for. Some were delirious, although only slightly wounded; others were quiet, and even apparently contented; while many rolled around and tried to find comfort in changing their positions.

The comradeship of suffering is a remark-

able thing. Alongside of a fallen tree were two men, one a German, most severely wounded, and by his side and supporting his head was a Frenchman who held the water-bottle to the fevered man's lips.

"Take him first; he's in an awfully bad way," said the Frenchman.

"No, no!" vehemently protested the German. "Take my friend first."

"We can take you both," said the surgeon, and as they carried the men to the ambulance it was almost pitiful to see the solicitude with which they eyed the carriers, neither thinking of himself, but of his friend.

The most pathetic sight witnessed in this remarkable adventure met their eyes as they emerged from the woodland. Near the fence lay two men, with arms outstretched and clasping each other's hand. One was a German captain, not more than thirty-five years of age, and the other a French lieutenant, apparently somewhat younger, both dead.

Louis could not prevent the tears which flowed, and the surgeon, who went over to examine the bodies, and called the attention of the helpers to the sight, turned away. Jacques looked at Louis, and then walked

away, not daring to trust himself, for he, too, was completely unnerved.

The surgeon gave a rough command. It was the only way he could control himself. The calm and peaceful faces of these late enemies haunted the boys for days, and they tried to tell the lieutenant about them, but it was some time before they could relate the story.

Before all the wounded were gathered in, the battle began over again. Shot and shell flew all about the next day, and in the evening the boys saw the preparations which were made to move back to a newly prepared line.

During all this wonderful retreat the boys saw nothing that seemed to demand this steady retirement. True, many lives were sacrificed, but there was nothing which savored of defeat in the sense that they were actually forced out of their positions.

The following day they were in Crépy, on the railroad which ran to Chantilly. The enemy now began to come in myriads over the hills. Strange to say, the French soldiers did not become panic-stricken, although their beloved Paris was indeed in peril.

They knew there was a cordon of great forts around the city, two great encircling lines of the most wonderful fortifications in the world, but they had heard of the 42-centimeter guns which had shriveled up the dome-topped forts of Liège and Namur, and actually rooted out the steel turrets of Maubeuge, which were considered impregnable.

It was now the 6th of September, one month and three days since the declaration of war. True, the Germans had predicted they would be in Paris within three weeks, but they were still forty miles away; and they had not brought up a third of their army, because the great forts in eastern France held them off, and they dared not pass them to the north and west.

They tarried in Crépy a single day only, and then fell back to Chantilly, twenty-five miles due north of Paris. They had heard of the removal of the government officials to Bordeaux, and this gave many the impression that the German advance could not be checked.

South of the town of Chantilly is a range of hills extending eastwardly, with a southern trend, toward the town of Meaux. During the retreat of the army thousands of men

had been at work along this line, and it was equipped with long-range guns.

The hills were full of trenches, all connected with one another and provided with an elaborate system of railway and wagon-road communications. It would have required two-thirds of the German army to surround the city, even though the forts to the east should have been captured and thus freed that portion of the army.

But the eventful 9th of September arrived. The Germans were in the town of Chantilly and had taken possession of the famous castle. During the day there was a lull in the firing. It seemed that every one was taking a long, deep breath before the next onslaught began.

XII

BATTLE OF THE MARNE—THE ADVANCE

TAKE a map of France, and with a pencil start at Chantilly and trace a course southeast to Meaux, on the River Marne, and follow the eastward windings of that river to Chalons-sur-Marne, eighty miles east of Paris, and go from that point in an east-by-north course to Verdun, and it will indicate roughly the position of the defending French line on the 9th of September.

The extreme right wing of the German army was northwest of Chantilly, somewhere near Beauvais, on the Oise River, a city which was in ancient times the capital of Bellovachi, a Belgic tribe.

So far as known, the entire French and English army was south of the line just indicated, the greater part being massed around and near the city of Paris. Beauvais is about forty miles north and somewhat to the west of the city.

In the early morning of the 9th a force of fully one hundred thousand French appeared at the river Therain, which flows through Beauvais, and, despite opposition, crossed the stream and began an eastward march against the right wing of the Germans.

The latter could not resist the impact of this force. Before the existence of this army was known to any one on the fighting-line, the order was given by the French commander to commence an offensive movement along the whole line.

Thus began the battle of the Marne, as it will be known in history. The object in thus vigorously attacking the enemy was to prevent the right wing from being reinforced at this critical moment, and the Germans had therefore only one of two alternatives—either to resist the attack, which could be done only by keeping their forces intact, or they must weaken the main line in order to strengthen the driving force of the army from the west.

To permit the French to turn their flank would mean disaster to their ammunition and provision trains, and without these necessities they would have to retreat or surrender.

Their lines had been extended too much.

The great wing was swung around to such a point that it was in danger of being doubled up, and this is exactly what happened.

For some reason which the soldiers did not understand, the Germans on the Marne began to yield. They fell back trench after trench, and mile after mile. What did it all mean?

The boys were with the bicycle corps in the early morning of the 10th, and approached the lines of the enemy's trenches with the same caution that was exhibited on the two days previous. They were ordered to ascertain where the enemy had taken up new positions, for it had now arrived at that point where they were compelled to advance by feet and not by miles.

The most careful observation with glasses failed to reveal the presence of an enemy in one of the trenches occupied the previous day. Some ruse, in all probability, was the opinion of the officers.

"I will make an investigation," said Kane, and, divesting himself of all useless encumbrances, he crossed the field and crawled to the next trench along a fence and hedge until he could inspect the first line.

It was evident that no one occupied the

trench, and, after waiting a quarter of an hour, to assure himself that he could not be mistaken, he ran forward and peered along the trench, the appearance of which, and the immense quantity of material left there, indicated a hurried departure.

At great risk he went out to the lateral, to the second traverse, but everywhere was the evidence of hasty departure.

He ran to the highest point and signaled the command. There was now no hesitancy in going forward, but Jacques was immediately despatched to the rear, to inform the general of the retreat of the Germans.

No time was lost in sending forward the brigade to occupy the deserted trenches, first to the second, then to the third, and finally to the fourth of the lines, some of them being the identical ones which they themselves had laboriously dug out during their retreat.

The scene was now one of unbounded enthusiasm, but the full story was not yet known. Something had happened. The orders came to follow the enemy without halting. Before the Germans left one trench the French were ready to occupy it.

So close together were the two forces for a period of more than two weeks that the capture of derelict Germans was an hourly occurrence. Many of these captures were made after severe conflict, but some were trapped and others surrounded between the trenches, and in numerous instances whole lines were enveloped before they could get out of the trenches through the laterals.

Thus far through the three weeks of fighting the French army had remained on the defensive, and moved back day after day. They did not know what moving forward meant.

Now, suddenly, all that was changed. They would know how it felt to win. It would be their lot to experience the thrills which accompany a charge that succeeds. The sight of a captured trench became a craving. Let us see how this was done.

For miles to the right and to the left, every footpath and every yard of ground was broken up by shells, or trampled down by the feet of marchers, who were steadily going forward into line, ready to halt and form into columns in preparation for charging or to resist an assault.

From a point beyond where the enemy's

trenches were known to be manned came the spiteful shrieks of shrapnel. Sometimes the flash, the noise of the explosion, and the appearance of the dirty yellow smoke would be very near the lines of advancers and the supports coming up behind.

A few men would be seen squirming around on the ground. Then a shrill whistle would be heard, and those in the lead would leap forward, twenty or more paces, and fall down and dig feverishly. They were safe.

Still the shrapnel kept on coming, faster and faster, if such a thing were possible. More and more men came into view. They were filed along like those who preceded. Then were heard the clank of trace-chains and the pounding of hoofs as the horses struck the stones and hard soil.

Above all this were the hoarse orders which changed the artillery wagons into position from the line into a formation at right angles to the direction they took in coming up.

The battery was now in line, between the columns of infantry, and there was a loud ring of the hastily opened breech-blocks, the hollow thump of the block-closing, the shrill note of a silvery whistle, and the earth began to tremble.

The infantry kept moving forward, a steady stream. Men were falling on all sides of them as they advanced, but they did not stop, nor even appear to heed them. Their duty was to assault, not to relieve.

The stretcher-bearers and the surgeons were far in the rear, in attendance on those previously fallen. Their time would soon come for duty on these crimson fields.

After the attacking line had on one occasion gone far ahead, the boys visited and carefully examined one of the trenches, in company with the lieutenant.

"Do you remember when we constructed this line of trenches?" he asked.

They glanced around, and then remembered how, for a whole day in the very place where they were standing, the Germans had given them a taste of the life there while they were pounding to make a way through.

"They have turned the ditches around, so that they face the other way," remarked Jacques.

"Yes, and they have added something!" cried Louis, as he ran through the trench to the north, where there was a shrub about five feet high.

"What is that?" inquired Jacques.

"That is a very cleverly concealed periscope," the lieutenant told them.

"How does it work?" Jacques asked.

"Look into it," suggested the lieutenant.

"Isn't it wonderful how clearly it shows the position in front!" Jacques said.

The lieutenant took a look, and exclaimed, "Why, this is provided with a specially prepared speculum!"

"What does that mean?" asked Jacques.

"The upper mirror is curved," explained the lieutenant. "The mirrors are called speculums."

"What is the object of that?" Jacques asked.

"So it will bring into range a wider area along the front," the lieutenant replied.

"Oh," said Jacques, "you mean that instead of having the mirror flat, it is bent something like a cylinder?"

"Yes," continued the lieutenant, showing the boys a couple of sketches; "and these will show you the reason. This one [Fig. 17] shows how the periscope transmits the object down to the eye. The body, A, of the instrument, in this case, is about eight feet long, so that its

top projects a little above the shrub, as you see. At the upper end of the casing is an opening, B, in which is fitted a mirror, C, at an angle of forty-five degrees, and at the bottom is an opening, D, through the case opposite to the opening B at the upper end. In this opening is located the viewing mirror, E, also at forty-five degrees."

"But how is the curved mirror arranged so it will give the broad view along the front?" Jacques asked.

"I was just coming to that," the lieutenant continued. "Look at this sketch [Fig. 18] for a moment, and it may give you the idea. A is the curved mirror, and B the different light-beams from the extended front, C. This gives the observer a clear view of a considerable scope. In fact, the word *periscope* means *look around*, and some of the instruments now made, and largely used on submarines, are of such a character that they have a very wide range."

In conformity with the orders sent to General Cheron on the evening of the tenth, the brigade now moved southeast. Heavy English reinforcements were arriving, and the soldiers became jubilant.

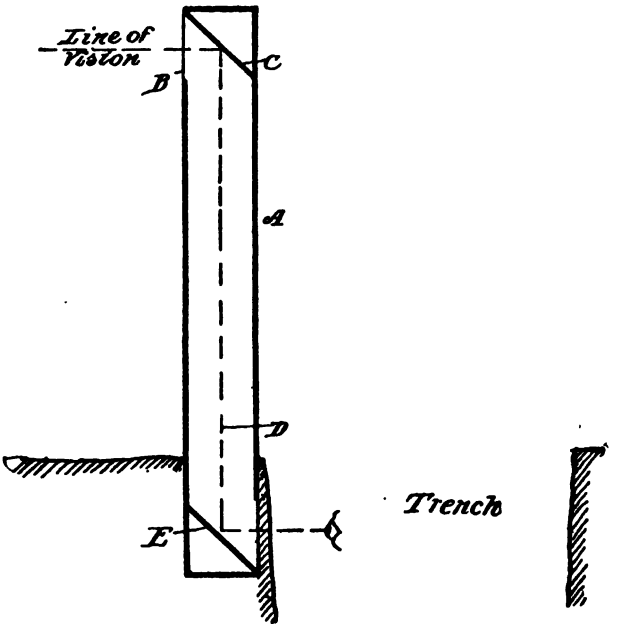


Fig. 17. Periscope.

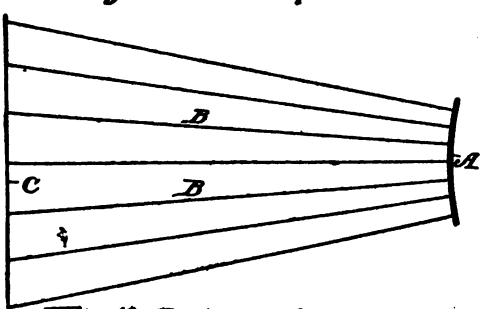


Fig. 18. Periscope Lens.

The prisoners who now came in appeared entirely different in deportment from those captured while the French were retreating. Then they had a jaunty air, which seemed to say, "Well, you got me, but there are plenty more coming to take my place." Now there was a feeling of depression and sullenness, and it was found, in many cases, that they had lacked food, due to the disturbance of their transportation system. Many of them declared that if it had not been for the beet-fields they would have starved. Sugar-beets are raised in large quantities all through the section where the armies had traveled, more particularly in the central and northern portions of France.

On the evening of the eleventh the Marne was sighted, northeast of Meaux, at the point where the river l'Ourcq empties into the Marne.

"We are going direct to Rheims," said the lieutenant, "after crossing the l'Ourcq. The report has just come in that the Germans are in retreat all along the line as far east as Verdun."

"That is glorious news!" shouted Louis. "I hope there will be no let-up now."

During the entire 12th of September the

brigade was under fire, and was so stubbornly resisted that they could not force the enemy on the hill beyond.

Every battery placed by the French was, somehow, demolished or made so uncomfortable that it had to be moved. The lieutenant was worried beyond measure. "There is something almost uncanny in the way the poor fellows of the two batteries were driven out. During the night we located the batteries at the edge of the grove to the right of the road, where they are absolutely screened. If the Germans get the range and the position now there is something wrong."

Jacques was sent that morning to Meaux with despatches, and was returning when he met Louis threading his way between the wagons on his way to the south, not more than a mile from the river.

"Where are you going, Louis?" he asked.

"Down to the ferry, where the railroad bridge crosses the loop," Louis replied.

"I'll go with you, if you intend to go back at once," said Jacques.

"Yes; the telephone-line is broken somewhere, and I've an order to bring up the wagon-trains by way of Nanteuil."

In fifteen minutes the river was reached, and from that place the wires were in working order. The Marne at this point makes a great bend, or loop, to the north, and the railway runs across the two limbs of this loop, but both bridges were, of course, destroyed as the Germans retreated, so that everything had to be ferried across while the pontoons were being laid.

At the upper end of the loop the boys dismounted close to the bank of the stream, and, leaning their wheels against the side of the bank, took off their shoes to bathe their feet.

While thus engaged Louis observed a string, or wire, hanging over a partly submerged branch of the limb on which he was sitting.

"That looks very queer to me," he said, pointing to it.

Jacques examined it, and finally said, "That looks like an insulated wire, something like those used on the telephones in this section."

"Let's crawl out and get it," suggested Louis.

"I can reach it with this branch; just wait a moment." And Jacques soon pulled it in,

and then walked along the shore up-stream for a hundred feet, pulling it out of the water and depositing it on the bank.

"This looks very suspicious," said Louis. "Suppose we go back, put on our shoes, and examine the line both ways."

Their wheels and everything else were now forgotten. They went down-stream for fully a thousand feet, where one of the bridges had been destroyed, and near which the wagon-road from the north passed.

The wire was followed along, and great was their surprise to find that it entered the earth and was embedded beneath the sod at the roadside, and appeared to go in the direction of one of the poles along the highway.

"I have it!" cried Jacques, in great excitement. "This wire goes to that pole; I am sure of it!"

Louis bounded up the short incline and examined the pole carefully. "It's not here!" he exclaimed.

Jacques was puzzled. "Isn't that singular! Come, let's dig it up." Teams and motor-cars were passing and repassing, but their drivers gave no heed to the work of the

boys, nor did the latter pay the least attention to anything but the puzzling wire under the sod which was found to run up to the pole they had examined with so much care.

"It passes the pole and runs parallel with the road now," said Jacques. "Examine the next pole!" he shouted to Louis.

"Nothing here!" was the response.

Jacques walked over and examined it also. A crease on one side attracted his attention. A smile lit up his face.

"Wait till I get out my knife," he said.

A few cuts were sufficient to reveal a wire placed in a groove which was neatly filled in with the wood that had been removed to make place for it.

"Are you sure that the wire we found runs to this pole?" Louis asked.

"We can easily settle that matter," said Jacques, and together they began to dig up the sod and pull up the wire. It led to the pole and was connected with the one embedded in it.

"Now for the other end of the wire," said Louis.

"Yes; but wait; we must coil up this wire

and get it out of view of the people passing," Jacques replied.

This seemed a business-like thing to Louis as he assented. The wire was coiled up and the roll deposited in the water close to the shore. Then they ran quickly to their wheels, and rode them to a point several hundred feet beyond the place where they stopped in their previous examination, and then went back and began the fishing-out operation.

"I wonder if this will never stop?" Jacques speculated, after they had exposed fully a quarter of a mile of the wire.

"Somebody is on the other end of this wire; I am sure of that," remarked Louis, as he walked along ahead of Jacques and pulled at the wire to dislodge it from its many supports on the river or hidden beneath the surface.

At a bend of the stream where it begins to flow to the south stood a gardener's cottage; at any rate, it appeared so to the boys, for directly to their left were fields of carefully tended vegetables.

The house stood on the bank of the stream, not a hundred and fifty feet away, and as the

little plateau on which it was built was fully fifteen feet above the water, the approach of the boys could readily be seen from the cottage itself.

Up to this moment, while the boys were astonished at the discovery of the wire in such an unexpected place, and the direct evidence of the extreme secrecy displayed in running it up the pole, still they had no suspicion that it had anything to do with the warring forces.

Before they came to a point directly below the cottage, the wire disappeared, and after some pulling it worked its way out of the ground and took a course up the hill in the direction of the house.

"That settles it to my mind," Jacques concluded. "The owners of the cottage have been stealing 'phone messages from the telephone company." And the boys laughed at the situation and walked back to their wheels.

They mounted and were wheeling away merrily, when, suddenly, Louis stopped and dismounted, exclaiming:

"Jacques, I think we are a couple of fools!"

"What's the matter?" asked Jacques, as he kept on wheeling slowly.

"How long do you suppose those gardeners have been stealing the telephone messages?" Louis replied.

Jacques stopped suddenly as the full force of this query burst on him. "From the appearance of the sod, I should say less than a week. I recall now that the sod wasn't set."

"Yes," agreed Louis; "and I think some of the sod along the line was dead, or looked wilted."

"Then the wire must have been put in within the last week or so," surmised Jacques.

"Why didn't we go up to the house and interview the people there?" And Louis appeared quite dejected at their stupidity.

"Do you mean to ask them about the wire?" Jacques asked.

"Oh no," said Louis. "Come on. I'm awfully thirsty!"

Jacques laughed. "Probably I want to buy some vegetables, too," he remarked, as they turned and sped toward the cottage.

Dismounting and leaving their wheels at the gate, they marched in, to be met by a large dog, who gave them a snarling welcome, but, for some reason, made no attack.

The moment the dog announced their en-

trance a large, sunburnt gardener appeared and gruffly demanded their business.

"We are very thirsty, sir. Can we have a drink?" Jacques asked.

"Help yourselves," grunted the gardener, and pointed to the pump.

Walking across the yard, they saw another man, probably a helper, smoking on the side porch. There was something about his eyes that attracted Louis's attention. They appeared to be shifty, and that they were piercing and searching was evident to both boys, for whenever they glanced in his direction they saw the owner intently scanning them.

After asking a few questions as to directions, the boys left.

"What is your impression?" Jacques asked.

"I don't believe they are gardeners," replied Louis.

XIII

DISCOVERING SECRET TELEPHONE-LINES

JACQUES looked at Louis for a moment, and then said, "I have come to the same conclusion; but tell me why you think he isn't a gardener?"

"Simply because when he pointed to the pump I saw his hand, and it didn't look as though it had ever held a hoe."

Jacques laughed at this deduction. "That seems to be a pretty good argument. But I didn't observe that. I formed my conclusion from two other things."

"I should like to hear the reasons you have," said Louis.

"I don't know about the big fellow," Jacques replied, "but I am sure the other one is a German."

"Now that may be so," Louis admitted.

"I know he is," Jacques affirmed.

"Why?" asked Louis.

"Well, did you ever see a Frenchman smoke that kind of a pipe?" Jacques asked.

"I have never been in Germany, and don't know," answered Louis.

"Well, I have," asserted Jacques, "and it was a sure-enough German pipe, and he smoked it just as the Germans do. But when we asked him about the route, did you notice how he shrugged his shoulders?"

"No; I can't say that anything unusual struck me," answered Louis.

"Well, didn't you see him shrug *both* shoulders?" Jacques asked.

"Possibly he did," Louis admitted.

"Of course he did," retorted Jacques.

"But what of that? All Frenchmen do that," Louis replied.

"What," demanded Jacques—"*two* shoulders? Oh no! The French shrug only one shoulder, but the Germans shrug both at the same time," and the boys howled with laughter.

"What fine detectives we would make!" said Louis, somewhat in a tone of derision. "Nevertheless, I believe we have struck more than a mere hornet's nest. Why not hurry back and tell the lieutenant?"

"Just the thing!" agreed Jacques. "He has good judgment. What do you suppose he will say?"

"Well, I don't like to be laughed at," remarked Louis, "but the thing looks so singular to me that I want an explanation. I shouldn't like to meet those fellows in the cottage—that is, I shouldn't like to meet them alone."

The boys rode quickly toward headquarters, and in one of the automobiles which they passed was the lieutenant. He hailed them, and when they saw who it was they waved frantically and started after the machine, pedaling with all their might.

The crowded condition of the road prevented the machine from running away from them, and it was soon overhauled. "Drive to the side," they said to the chauffeur; "we want to consult the lieutenant."

This was a bold thing for the boys to say, as it sounded very much like an order. The chauffeur turned to the lieutenant, who smiled as he saw the boys' excitement and knew that it was not discourtesy on their part, but only the result of their eagerness.

The boys entered the machine and told

their story. The lieutenant actually hugged them. "Do you know what you have done?"

"No," both boys acknowledged.

"You have made the most interesting discovery that this war will record," the lieutenant assured them.

"What is that?" Jacques asked.

"Those are Germans at the cottage," explained the lieutenant. "They are the ones who have been signaling to the German gunners who have just wiped out one of the concealed batteries that we planted last night."

It was now the turn of the boys to become elated, and they were as much so as the lieutenant.

"What shall we do?" asked Jacques.

"Will you go with me?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes; we'll go with you anywhere," answered Jacques.

"You have your revolvers?" the lieutenant inquired.

"Yes, and our carbines," Jacques replied.

"Then we shall have to take in those men," asserted the lieutenant.

"What for?" demanded Jacques.

"For stealing messages," the lieutenant said, smiling. "It is an awful thing for any one to steal electricity."

"Are you going to charge them with sending messages?" Louis asked.

"Oh no," replied the lieutenant. "Simply arrest them on the ground that they have tapped the wires of the company, which is against the law, you know."

"But they look like a couple of brutes, and may be troublesome to handle," Jacques warned him.

"Have no fear on that score," confidently asserted the lieutenant. "I was in the Police Department for ten years, and have had some experience with men of that sort."

This information was a great relief to the boys. The chauffeur was directed to speed the machine down the road and over to the left, and the cottage was soon in sight.

As before, the dog gave warning, and the larger man walked out, somewhat startled at the sight of the officer. The latter bowed politely and said:

"The officials of the telephone-line have complained that their lines have been tapped, and by accident we find that a concealed line

runs to this place. We are sorry to trouble you, but it will be necessary for you to accompany us to the office of the company, so that you can explain what knowledge you have of it, unless you wish to explain it to me, in which case it will not be necessary for you to go."

When the lieutenant commenced talking there was a decided scowl on the man's face, but as he neared the end of his polite request and the man saw that there was no demand coupled with arrest, his face relaxed as he replied:

"It will afford me pleasure to give you all the information in my power. I took a lease of this place last spring, and when I came into possession the owner told me about some trouble that the former tenant had, due to the fact that he was a confidence-man, who, in order to further his schemes, installed a secret line."

"Thank you for the information," the lieutenant replied. "Would you be kind enough to show me your lease?"

"With pleasure, sir," and the man strode across the room and opened the door of the adjoining room.

The moment he did so the lieutenant leaned forward and with a hasty glance scoured every side and nook of the room. His face was impassive as the man returned with the document and handed it to him.

He glanced over it, and read in an undertone, "'Executed April 22d, 1914.' That is all right. Pardon me for being so particular. Be kind enough to show me the instrument which the former tenant left here."

"Certainly," the man said; "this is the equipment just as you see it."

"This is merely a receiver, and you have no transmitter?" inquired the lieutenant.

"Oh no! I have no need for the instrument—at any rate, not until the crops are ready, and possibly not then."

"Have you cultivated the crops yourself?" the lieutenant asked him.

"We have no one here but myself and a helper," the man answered.

"If it is not too much trouble, ask him to step in," demanded the lieutenant.

The man walked to the window and called to the smaller man outside, who leisurely opened the door and listlessly looked at the lieutenant.

After asking the smaller man a few questions, the lieutenant said: "Your answers appear satisfactory. It will be necessary for me to write out the substance of them, so I can send in my report. I would thank you for pen and ink and a sheet of paper."

"Louis, will you be kind enough to take down what I dictate?" Although startled at this unexpected request, Louis took up the pen, and the lieutenant dictated a plain statement to the effect that the present tenant and his helper were the only ones on the premises; that he leased the grounds in April and found the telephone installed when he took possession, and other particulars that had been elicited.

"Kindly sign that, so that there may be no further trouble," the lieutenant requested.

The man smiled and sat down at the table, and Louis handed him the pen. As he did so the lieutenant stepped back and whipped out a revolver. The smaller man noticed the act, and made a motion, but before his hand had moved six inches the lieutenant shouted: "Throw up your hands. A movement by either will be the last of you!"

The boys were almost frozen with terror,

but for an instant only. Jacques was the first to draw his revolver, and it seemed to Louis as though his hand went to his pocket without any distinct will of his own to direct the action.

The larger man held up his hands. Jacques's revolver pointed straight at the heart of the smaller man, and without a moment's hesitation the lieutenant said, "Louis, get the rope from the machine and invite the chauffeur to come in with you."

Louis bounded out the door. "We want the ropes in the car. We have arrested two men, and they may give us trouble. Come in at once."

The chauffeur threw off the cover of the seat, and, dragging out the rope, hurried in with Louis.

Motioning to the chauffeur, who came in staring at the unusual sight, the lieutenant, pointing to the larger man, said: "Tie his hands behind his back. Don't be afraid you will hurt him."

The man noted the cool, determined manner of the officer. He knew it would be useless to parley with him; but after both men had been secured he said, "What is this for?"

"Giving information to the enemy!" replied the lieutenant, in the mildest tone possible.

"You cannot prove it," the man declared.

"No; but we can prove that you have lied to me," said the lieutenant.

"I did not," the man asserted; "the lease was issued to me as stated."

"Very true," agreed the lieutenant, "but the telephone-line was put in within the past week."

The man started. He did not deny it.

"But while that may be true," he replied, "we have not communicated with the Germans."

The lieutenant looked at the man for a moment in silence, without a change in his face or in his attitude. It was a piercing look that the boys long remembered.

"No; not over *that* line," he remarked.

The man started, while his face grew ashy pale.

"I must congratulate you on the ingenuity of the scheme," said the lieutenant. "You have a wonderful hiding-place for the transmitter."

The man did not respond. They were taken

out to the machine, and one of them was secured to the seat alongside the chauffeur, while the other was made fast to one of the front seats in the body of the car.

"Jacques, as you understand the electrical arrangement, I will detail you to go with Louis and detach the instruments, and bring everything with you," ordered the lieutenant.

The boys jumped out and made their way to the house, first disconnecting the receiver.

"How do you suppose the lieutenant discovered the location of the transmitter?" Jacques asked. "I haven't seen it."

"That is a mystery to me," Louis answered.

"Isn't he clever?" exclaimed Jacques.

"I wonder what his object was in making a pretense that he wanted the man to sign that statement?" queried Louis.

"I haven't the least idea," acknowledged Jacques.

"Well, I'm going to make an investigation on that point," Louis promised.

"Wouldn't the transmitter have to be connected with the same line somewhere about here?" asked Jacques.

"Yes; but this seems to be nothing but a

receiver," Louis said. "I wonder where the battery is?"

"I mean," Jacques continued, "wouldn't it be possible to talk over the wire we discovered if there was a transmitter in the circuit?"

"Certainly, if there is a battery in the circuit," Louis affirmed.

"Then it must be somewhere in the house, or the lieutenant would not have found it," declared Jacques.

"But when did he have an opportunity to look for it?" Louis asked.

"That is what I can't under— Hello! what is this?" exclaimed Jacques as he pushed aside a chair and saw a wire dangling.

An ordinary cloak was carelessly thrown over the chair, and Jacques raised it up. The dangling wire was attached to the back of the chair. He followed up the wire, and it led to the top. It was an unusually large chair with a thick back.

"That's too good!" almost shrieked Jacques.

"What is it?" asked Louis, as he closed the door of the closet, where he had been rummaging around.

"I have found it!" Jacques exclaimed.

"My, but the lieutenant was shrewd in finding it so soon! The transmitter is in the back of the chair."

The boys gazed in wonder at the contrivance.

"Don't say a word to the lieutenant about the find," said Louis.

"But we have got to take it along, and how can we do that?" Jacques wanted to know.

"Put the old chair on behind; we can't get inside anyhow," suggested Louis.

"Wait until I tell them to back up. Then bring it out and hitch it on while I carry the other things into the tonneau," Jacques ordered. "But one moment," he continued. "I want to satisfy myself where they have made the connections with the main line. We haven't found the battery yet."

This information opened Louis's eyes. "That is a fact. Wait until I go downstairs," he said.

"One moment," said Jacques. "The connecting wire goes down right by the side of the partition. Do you think you can find it?"

"Come down!" shouted Louis.

"Have you found it?" Jacques asked him.

"Yes—the wire, but there are no batteries," replied Louis, quite mystified.

The boys now found that the wires ran toward the river, but did not join the incoming wire.

"I have it," said Jacques; "they have an independent line. It would not surprise me in the least to find that the transmitting line runs to another branch, probably on another road, and the battery is likely to be located between the house and the place where it connects with the main line."

"Well, let us get the things out as quickly as possible," and Louis called to the chauffeur to back up, which he accommodatingly did. While Louis made a great show of loading up the different parts, Jacques quickly tied the chair to the rear of the body, and presently announced that they were ready to start.

The machine could not go fast enough for the boys, and the appearance of the car, with a chair tied to its back and two prisoners with hands bound, was a sight which created a sensation as they passed, and caused immense excitement when some of the leading facts became known that afternoon.

XIV

THE GERMAN SPIES

EVERYTHING seemed to be in a whirl when the boys alighted from the machine. The men were led off to the prison, and strict orders given to deliver them on demand.

Lieutenant Breton rushed to the general's quarters, leaving the boys with the telephone apparatus, only requesting that it be taken off and produced at the proper time. The chair on the rear of the machine he had not noticed.

After the proper receipt was taken from the orderly whose duty it was to hold the apparatus, the boys went over to the general's quarters and were immediately admitted.

They saluted the general, and he could not say enough in praise of their actions. "You have rendered the most signal service to

France. It will be duly recognized," he said.

"Well, it wasn't much of a trick to find that out," remarked Louis.

"No," said the general, "not if any one is smart enough to know how to take advantage of it. The fact that you found it out is the main thing."

"Of course," remarked the lieutenant, "I do not yet know that those men had any means of transmitting intelligence to the German lines. The fact is, no search has yet been made to find the transmitter."

The boys looked at the lieutenant in astonishment. "I thought you knew where they had the transmitter," said Jacques. "You know you commended the big man for the cleverness with which he had hidden it."

"I said that merely for effect," explained the lieutenant. "I suspected that he had a transmitter somewhere near at hand, but it was not likely to be in the house."

The boys laughed, and now it was the lieutenant's turn to be surprised.

"It *was* in the house," said Louis.

"How do you know?" the lieutenant asked him.

"We found it!" Jacques exclaimed.

"Where?" asked the lieutenant, as though doubting the testimony.

"In the back of the chair—the one that had the cloak thrown over it," Jacques replied.

"Get the chauffeur at once," the lieutenant ordered. "We must have that chair. Send him for it without delay."

Jacques laughed at the vehemence of his utterances, and told him that they had it.

The lieutenant looked at Jacques as the general burst out laughing and said: "That is too good to keep. Come, Lieutenant, we ought to have some first-class Paris detectives here to help us with the evidence."

"But I didn't see the chair. Where did you have it?" the lieutenant inquired.

"Jacques strapped it to the back of the machine while I loaded up the receiver," Louis replied.

"So you thought you would put up a job on me?" said the lieutenant, with a broad smile that brought out another roar from the general.

"No," Jacques explained, "but we felt mighty small when you made that fellow

believe that you knew where it was while we hadn't the least idea where you could have seen it; so we concluded that we would bring the chair along, after we found the wire leading to it."

"I call that fine work," remarked the general.

"Still, that does not explain where the wire with the transmitter leads to," remarked the lieutenant.

"I think it is an independent line," said Jacques.

"What makes you think so?" asked the general.

"Because," Jacques replied, "the wire leads out of the cellar in a different direction from the incoming wire, and I have not been able to locate the battery in the cottage. It may be somewhere near where the connection is made with the main line. There is another road to the east of the cottage which connects with the bridge on the east side of the loop. It is my opinion that the transmitting line goes over and connects with one of the wires on that road."

"Jacques's view may be correct, but it still puzzles me how they could send any

messages over any of the lines to the north, when all of them are in our possession and under close surveillance," said the lieutenant.

"We must find out where the leak is. Lieutenant, I shall detail you and Corporals Raoul and Egmont to make a thorough investigation of this matter and report to me at two o'clock to-morrow."

"Corporals!" said Louis. "Who are corporals?"

"I think I heard you so addressed," said the lieutenant, as he looked at the boys and then at the general.

Lieutenant Breton took the boys' hands and said: "This is only a small measure of appreciation of the noble work you have done to-day. It is not the last you will hear of the exploit."

The boys were almost in tears, while the two officers stood there looking at each other; finally they saw the general nod to the lieutenant.

The latter said, "Well, Corporals, we have some work to do; come with me."

The boys saluted the general and followed the lieutenant. He led them to the storekeeper, and, addressing the officer in charge,

said, "The general has ordered two corporals' suits delivered to these boys at once."

That officer turned and glanced at them for a moment, and then, after the boys had given a salute, and he had gravely returned it, he said, "What is this I hear about the two spies?"

"I don't know what you have heard," answered the lieutenant, "but here are the fellows who found the wire and the place where the spies were."

"I heard the men all talking about it," the storekeeper officer told them. "And so you are corporals now? Good for you! You ought to be generals."

"Well, I think lieutenant is pretty big," said Louis, as he looked admiringly at their friend.

"That was an awfully brave thing to do," Jacques said to the lieutenant, reverting to the capture of the spies. "What was your object in getting the man to sit down and sign his name to the statement?"

"We had two desperate men to deal with," the lieutenant answered, "and both had their hands in a most suspicious position during the entire conversation. I had to divert

their minds from my real purpose, and you will remember that I succeeded in making them believe that their answers satisfied me."

"Did you suspect that they were spies when you went in?" asked Jacques.

"Yes," replied the lieutenant.

"What made you think so?" Jacques asked.

"The peculiar movements of the man on the porch," the lieutenant explained.

"Why, did you know the man was there?" asked Jacques.

"You told me about him yourselves. Don't you remember?" the lieutenant reminded the boys.

"That's so," replied Jacques; "but was there anything suspicious about his being on the porch?"

"No," admitted the lieutenant, "but I could see, through the crack in the screen, that when we were talking he put his hand to one side of his head and inclined it, as though listening. The idea occurred to me at once that they had a listening-tube, or some means of communicating between the porch and the room."

"Then, when you sent the man out of the room—" began Jacques.

"That's it, exactly," interrupted the lieutenant. "When the man went out to get the lease, I had an opportunity to examine the side of the room, and the round frame on the wall next the porch is the mouthpiece at the end of a tube which goes to the porch."

"But are you sure that the chair on the porch is connected with that sounding-board?" asked Jacques.

"No," admitted the lieutenant, "but the wall of the porch has strips of canvas tacked over it which is of no possible use, either for ornamentation or for service, and the mouthpiece is undoubtedly behind that."

"Then you formed your ideas about the men from that circumstance?" Jacques asked him.

"Not wholly," the lieutenant replied. "According to the man's account the telephone was installed months ago. The condition of the sod which covered the wires was sufficient to show that it must have been laid down within a week. But that is not all. You said it was the ordinary telephone wire. If such had been the case its submergence for several months would have been sure to cause a leakage of water through the insulation, and

that would have meant a short circuit and rendered the line useless; so for these two reasons I felt sure he was lying."

The boys' search for information was now interrupted by the man from the store-room quarters with their suits, who informed them that they would require some alterations.

"How long will it take?" asked Jacques, impatiently.

"A couple of hours," the man replied.

"We can't wait," Louis declared.

"The general has ordered these men to be fitted out immediately, and it is most important that the work should be done at once," remarked the lieutenant.

"That being the case," the man said, "call back in three-quarters of an hour. Let me simply take the lengths and the girth measurements. Ah! this coat will not require any alterations, and only one pair of the trousers needs to be changed."

"In the mean time," the lieutenant told the boys, "come to my room, and we can there arrange our plans." When they were comfortably seated, he said: "Several things must be ascertained before two o'clock tomorrow afternoon. The first of these is the

verification of this document," and he drew out the lease.

"Don't you think it is genuine?" Louis inquired.

"It has every appearance of regularity," the lieutenant acknowledged. "It has the proper seal of the attesting notary, it is provided with the correct stamp to indicate that the tax required has been paid, and it has been duly recorded in this commune."

"Then we may assume that there is no question on that point," Louis suggested.

"Quite true," admitted the lieutenant; "but the next thing to ascertain is whether this man's name is Théodore Bresson."

"Is that the name on the lease?" Louis asked.

"Yes," the lieutenant replied; "it was made out by Carolyn Pierret. Possibly she is living in the neighborhood. One of us must visit her if she can be found."

"Where do you think we are most likely to get information about people who live in this neighborhood?" asked Jacques.

"We are too far from the village to enable us to get much information there, but the only plan available is to learn from the

neighbors," the lieutenant told them. "I suggest that you, Louis, as soon as your uniform is ready, go scout along the two roads leading to the river, as well as the cross-road, and interview the woman if you can find her."

"I'll find her if she is in the neighborhood, you may depend on that," Louis declared.

"Get her to describe Bresson, and explain just why you want the information," suggested the lieutenant; "and in case her description tallies with the man, serve notice that she must appear at headquarters before two o'clock to-morrow."

"What shall I do in the mean time?" asked Jacques.

"Go down to the house as fast as you can, and merely trace out the direction that the transmitter wire runs," the lieutenant told him.

"Yes, and find out everything I can about it," added Jacques.

"That is the idea, exactly," the lieutenant agreed. "In the mean time I want to learn where the notary who took the acknowledgment lives. All this will keep us busy for several hours, and it will give us all the clues

we need to work on in the forenoon to-morrow."

How natty the boys looked as they emerged from the store-room quarters at three o'clock that afternoon! Before they had walked fifty feet they were met by two raw soldiers and were promptly saluted. This was an unnecessary act on the part of the soldiers, for the boys were non-commissioned officers; but the new recruits knew no better.

"Those fellows were too quick for me on the saluting business," Louis remarked. "When I saw the uniforms coming I almost had it in mind to salute."

"What, salute a soldier!" Jacques exclaimed.

"Of course not; but I knew saluting was in order, and I rather had the thing mixed in my mind," replied Louis.

"Why not go see the general and thank him?" suggested Jacques.

"I suppose that would be a good thing to do," Louis replied, and they marched over to the headquarters tent and announced to the guard that Corporals Raoul and Egmont were in waiting.

"Come right in!" shouted the general. The

boys saluted, and the general returned the salute in the most formal manner, and then came forward and took each by the shoulder and turned him around.

"Good fits! You look like soldiers now. What can I do for you?" he asked.

"We came merely to present our compliments and to thank you," responded Jacques. "We must be going."

"I appreciate your call. Adieu!" said the general as he returned the boys' salute.

The lieutenant whizzed by as they came out of the tent, and he waved his hand and craned his neck to view the new uniforms, nodding his head in approval.

"He is off on the business, sure. Now for our part of the job," said Louis.

"Well, good-by for the day. I am going down this road," and Jacques leaned forward and began to spurt, while Louis went down the west road to the south.

A half-mile beyond the trenches, which were now occupied by the main forces, Louis began his series of questioning among the people who still remained in the neighborhood. He had poor success until near the river, where he found an old man who knew Madame Pierret.

"She lives on the cross-road, directly north of the grounds leased to Bresson," he told Louis.

"Did you know Bresson?" Louis asked.

"Oh yes; I was well acquainted with him," the old man told him.

"How long have you known him?" continued Louis.

"About four months," the old man admitted.

"Do you know when he rented the place?" Louis persisted.

"In April, I think; that is, about four months ago," the old man replied.

"Bresson is a large man, is he not?" questioned Louis.

"No, he is a small man, and has a peculiar eye. Some people don't like him," the old man answered.

When Louis left he found himself repeating the words "peculiar eye, peculiar eye." Why should that affect him so?

While nearing Madame Pierret's house he stopped suddenly and again repeated the words. He remembered now. The small man had a peculiar eye. The boys had both noticed it and commented on his singular

and piercing expression when he looked at them.

The house appeared deserted; he knocked and rang the bell, but to no avail. Not three hundred feet away was another cottage, from which smoke was issuing. Louis hurried there, and was informed by the tenants—a man and his wife—that the old lady had left and gone to Meaux a week before the Germans arrived.

"Do you know Mr. Bresson, who lives on her place?" Louis inquired.

"We know him as a neighbor only, but are not familiar with him," both man and wife affirmed.

"How long has he lived on Madame Pierret's place?" questioned Louis.

"Less than a month," they replied.

"He is a very small man, is he not?" asked Louis.

"No, he is the big man; the other is a good-for-nothing fellow who has been hanging around for three or four months," the man answered.

"I am from the headquarters of the commanding officer in this section, and you are ordered to be at headquarters to-morrow afternoon at two o'clock," said Louis.

The man addressed, as well as the woman by his side, grew pale with fear as they stammered a reply.

"You need have no fear," said Louis. "We simply want you to identify Mr. Bresson and tell us how long he has been in this neighborhood. In the mean time you are not to talk to any one about my call or mention that you are to appear at headquarters."

His duty was done. Some one was in the wrong; that was sure. While speeding to the east he saw Jacques walking along the bank of the river, and, at the turn, pedaled down and hailed him.

"I have found the battery," shouted Jacques as he saw Louis approaching.

"What have you there?—another line?" Louis asked him.

"Yes, the line the transmitter was on goes out to the east road. That was a shrewd trick, to say the least," replied Jacques.

Louis reported the result of his investigations, and the boys felt satisfied that the men were not what they claimed to be. At any rate, there was some crooked work in that neighborhood.

As for Jacques, he was jubilant at the find. In the very well where the boys had drunk

that day he found the batteries under the curb. From that point on there was not much trouble to follow the lead of the wires down to the river and east to the main road, where Jacques was now heading.

"Go back and get the battery outfit at the pump," said Jacques, "while I follow up the wire. I am curious to know how they sent the information to the German lines."

After the batteries were brought up and placed by the side of the road, Jacques neared the highway, and still the wires went on, passing the remains of the bridge, and then a few hundred feet beyond it left the river and ran direct to a fairly large building set some distance from the road.

The wire was ripped out without mercy now, and, when it was evident that the house was the terminus, Jacques dropped the wire, ran up the steps, and rang the bell impatiently. There was no response.

There was nothing on the porch but a coating of dust, which Louis noticed the moment he came up. "There is no one at home here," he said.

"Then we must get in, some way," said Jacques, "for the wire leads to this place."

XV

SIGNALING TO AND FROM AEROPLANES

WHILE the boys were at the house and debating as to the advisability of breaking in, the lieutenant had unexpectedly unearthed a part of the plot.

Meaux, four miles southwest, was the capital of the commune, and there it was hoped the notary could be found; but when the lieutenant called he found that that official was with the French army in the field somewhere along the front, and it would be a hopeless task to find him within the next twenty-four hours.

The next step was to visit the officials of the telephone company whose wires ran to the surrounding towns. At his request the names of all people who were subscribers living along the lines leading to the north were given him, but they assured the lieutenant

that they had no knowledge of any tapping wires on the lines.

But he had the satisfaction of finding Madame Pierret, and to her he explained the situation. She declared it was the first time she had ever heard about the previous tenant being a confidence-man, and she certainly did not inform Mr. Bresson that there was a secret wire.

"What kind of a man is Mr. Bresson?" he asked.

"A small man with a peculiar squint in his eye. He seemed to be a good worker, and I have had no fault to find with him," Madame Pierret replied.

"Did he have a companion that you are aware of?" the lieutenant inquired.

"I left about two weeks ago, when the Germans were still beyond Rheims. Up to that time he was working there alone," Madame Pierret informed him.

The lieutenant told Madame Pierret the story about the spies, and she was indignant; and after arranging transportation for her he was about to leave the telephone-office, when the manager informed him that a conversation was now being held by a person

from the north over the western line, and the operator stated that the same parties had daily talks, but in all cases it was on strictly business matters. The lieutenant requested to be put on the line, and, after listening for some time, turned to the manager and said, "Do you know the man to whom this message is sent—that is, the person on this end of the line?"

"No; but his name is Rudolph Weidler, and he is a business man on the next block," the manager answered.

"Thank you. I have all the information I need," and the lieutenant entered the machine and drove to the store occupied by Mr. Weidler.

"Is this Mr. Weidler?" he inquired.

For an instant the man paled, which the lieutenant was quick to observe.

"Please accompany me," was all he said as the man admitted his identity.

The absolute calmness of the officer almost caused him to collapse.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in a voice which was far from firm.

"That will be explained later," he was told.

"I must see my wife first," demanded Mr. Weidler.

"I cannot permit that," was the response.

There was no help for it. Weidler was hurried out to the waiting machine, and within less than an hour the man was locked up in the temporary jail at headquarters.

The lieutenant had just disposed of his prisoner when the boys arrived covered with perspiration.

"We have found the signaling-place," was Jacques's opening statement.

"Signaling-place?" queried Breton. "Did you find the transmitter line and the battery, and do you know where it led to?"

"Yes, we have all that," Jacques assented. "They didn't send the information by telephone, but signaled it from a house a quarter of a mile east of the gardener's cottage."

"The ingenuity of that scheme is marvelous!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"Do you think so?" asked Jacques.

"Stop to think of the guards which they placed to defy detection," the lieutenant reminded them. "The receiver was on a line connected with a subscriber in Meaux, who would receive by telephone, from an operator

within the German lines, certain instructions. The person receiving the message in Meaux would reply only by 'Yes' or 'No,' and ask questions as well as impart information by taps on the transmitter."

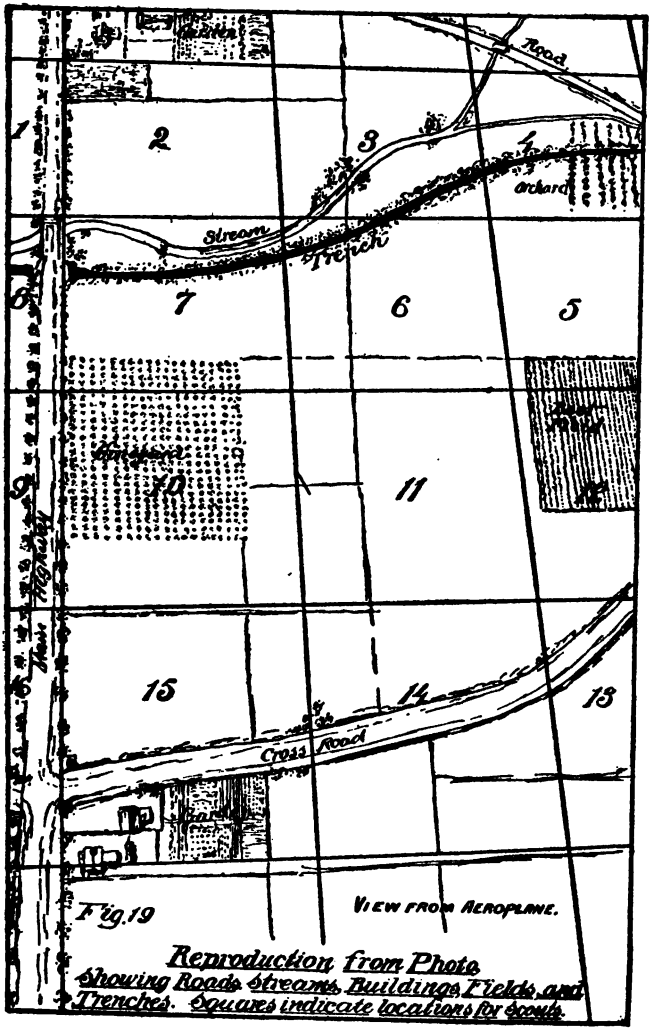
"But what did that have to do with the outfit we discovered?" Jacques inquired.

"The receiving wire which you found was in that circuit," explained the lieutenant. "The information sent to Meaux was not intended for the subscriber there, but for the use of Bresson, who heard and acted accordingly."

"But how could he tell them by the signal just where to find the batteries?" asked Louis.

"That is a comparatively easy matter," the lieutenant replied. "A map is divided into small squares, and each square is numbered. In the map they used the squares are only a quarter of a mile apart. Now suppose a battery is located in the center of one of these squares; then the signaler only needs to give the number. If it is near the northeast corner, the number is given with the letters *N. E.* or the sign for them."

"That explains the numbers on the flags," said Louis.



Reproduction from Photo
Showing Roads, Streams, Buildings, Fields, and Trenches. Squares indicate locations for Scouts.

"But how do you know about the maps?" Jacques questioned.

"I have one of them," replied the lieutenant. (Fig. 19.)

"Where did you get it?" Jacques asked him.

"I took it from a prisoner which I have just landed," he was told.

"Who is he?" persisted Jacques.

"A business man from Meaux—a German," the lieutenant cheerfully replied.

The public were not admitted to the inquiry that afternoon when Bresson was put on trial. He was confronted by the evidence, and the testimony was so conclusive that only one verdict was possible.

Weidler was the head of the system of espionage, and Bresson was the small man; the larger man, as it turned out, was an officer in the German army, which he afterward admitted.

In the house which the boys last invaded they found, after a more careful search, copies of the identical maps which Weidler had in his possession. The accidental discovery of the wire in the water, by the boys, prompted the military authorities to make a most careful search of all abandoned houses, and in

this work the boys and the lieutenant took a prominent part.

There were no more concealed batteries suddenly blotted out of existence, while the exact location of wagon-trains and the situations occupied by the commanding officers were not now subjected to bombardment every hour in the day.

The discovery of this shrewd system of espionage gave the boys a strong sense of their duty, and showed them that observation is the all-important thing in a campaign like that in which they were engaged, and that every sense must be kept alert.

It is to be regretted that their discovery meant the death of three men, but when they considered how instrumental these men had been in destroying hundreds of other men, the feeling of regret soon passed away.

In the Second Regiment, which we have previously mentioned, was a jolly, rollicking sort of a fellow called Dude Benet. Not that he was at all "stuck up" or inclined to put on airs, but because when the regiment left Paris, four days before the Germans began the retreat, he was followed by a very handsome white-and-liver-colored setter.

The boys frequently saw Span, as his master called him. He followed Benet everywhere, and his intelligence was frequently commented on by men and officers. He became the pet of the regiment, and soon grew fond of the boys; but he was passionately attached to his master, and seemed to understand his every wish.

The boys had been told that on the following day the entire brigade would commence a giant drive against the foe, and they were out early, but not before a heavy cannonading had begun.

The Germans seemed to be infused with new life on that day. The shells came thicker and faster than ever before. It seemed to be a battle with desperate men. Heavier guns had been brought up, and it was ghastly to see the havoc which many of them made.

Dude Benet and Span were in one of the forward trenches where the shells fell with the greatest force; while the boys, carrying orders during the morning, went through the laterals and passed along the traverses to reach different parts of the lines.

Their duty was at headquarters, unless actually engaged in carrying despatches, and

frequently they would meet each other and return together.

There had been an unusually heavy detonation behind them as they were leaving the second trench to the rear, but this did not affect them; somehow it was just another little punctuation mark.

They stood there for five minutes, looking out over the scene and commenting on the wonderful sights, when Span was noticed flying over the ground intervening between the two trenches, barking wildly. He was a mass of dirt, with clay all over his head and his fore-legs littered with mud.

He spied the boys, and, running up, leaped over into the trench, barking wildly and clawing and biting at the trousers of the boys.

"Something is the matter; let us go back," said Louis.

The moment they started toward the front trench, Span flew ahead, and when the boys stopped for an instant only he was back, urging them on with as much positiveness as though he had spoken to them.

They followed the dog through the lateral, and, turning into the trench, saw ahead that

the earth had entirely covered one portion, and on this the dog leaped.

When they reached the freshly made mass of dirt, the only thing which could be seen was the face of a man. It was Dude. The noble animal had uncovered his face, as was evidenced by the streaks of the dog's paws radiating out from the face of his master.

The shovels were soon in action, and the setter actually danced around and laughed. There was no barking now; at every turn the dog would peer over into the hole, satisfied that the work of succor was going along without his aid; but he laughed, and Louis, who was passionately fond of animals, could not help but put his face close to Span's head every time he looked down at his master's face.

The boys knew enough now to bring the canteen into action. Dude was unconscious when they began digging, but the water soon revived him.

The first words he uttered were, "That was a pretty good job!"

"Yes, he is a brave fellow," said Louis, throwing his arm around the dog's neck.

Dude stared at the boys for a moment, and then said, "I don't understand you."

"If it hadn't been for Span you would have been smothered to death by this time," said Jacques.

"What has he done?" Dude asked.

And the boys told him, while Span actually nestled himself down on Dude's breast.

"I didn't know that, brave little comrade!" he said. "I was thinking that the Germans did a pretty good job when they hit me."

"Are you wounded, too?" Louis asked.

"Well, my right leg feels queer," Dude answered. "I suppose it will be all right when it is dug out."

During the conversation the boys were not idle. Dude's body was free, but his legs were still firmly held by the packed earth, and after sufficient soil had been scraped away he was drawn out. There were now plenty of men ready to relieve the boys, although the latter stoutly resisted all their efforts to displace them.

A fragment of shell had torn Dude's leg below the knee and shattered the bone. It was now the proud duty of the boys to help the stretcher-bearers carry him back and help him on his way to the hospital.

"You may say what you want to," said

Jacques, "but I believe dogs know some things. I believe Span knew just as much what was required after the earth went over Dude as any man would know."

"Of course, that looks reasonable," Louis agreed. "Why didn't Span run and shout for some one to help Dude the moment the earth covered him? I think the majority of people would have looked for some one else, but instead of that Span rendered *first aid*."

At this the stretcher-bearers laughed, and so did Dude; and Louis continued: "The dog seemed to know that air to breathe was of more use to Dude than calling for help, and when he had done all he could he called on others."

A few weeks after this occurrence the boys were delighted to receive a letter from Dude, written from his cot in the American Ambulance Hospital, Paris, in which he stated that his wound was healing, and that Span had been provided with a fine bed just outside the door of the main entrance and would come in every day to visit him and go around to receive the congratulations of the other patients.

A few days after their rescue of Dude the boys witnessed the arrival of the first of the foreign or colonial troops other than the British. Those who interested them the most were the Turcos, a strong, well-built body of men, with the most picturesque uniforms, which the boys thought better fitted for show in a parade than for use on the battlefield. These uniforms, however, are well adapted to give free action to their wearers' limbs, comparable in this respect with the uniforms of the Zouaves, whose baggy trousers were not unlike those of the Turcos.

There were many intelligent men among them, and in the contingent stationed next to the brigade to which the boys were attached several nationalities were represented. They found there two Greeks and a Bulgarian, the latter a sharp-eyed, wiry, and quick-witted little fellow, who seemed to take a fancy to them.

It was not long before the Turcos heard about the boys and their exploits, and the boys loved to hear little Bukova tell about his experiences in the Balkan War.

"This war is being fought in an ignoble way," he told them. "Everybody seems to be

afraid. We did no fighting behind breastworks in Macedonia. In the great onslaught at Kumanova we fought all day without even a rail to get behind, and we made the attack and won. At Dibra it was the same; we stood in the open and defied the shot and shell."

"Well," Jacques exclaimed, "do you think we ought to stand in the open and get shot, just for the fun of saying that it is *noble?*"

Bukova smiled; he probably viewed it in another light.

"But this is awfully tiresome," he complained. "Down in a ditch, sighting a gun through a little groove of dirt; and then there are some things that make a fellow mad."

"What are those?" asked Jacques.

"When a bullet strikes the dirt ahead of your gun and fills your eyes with sand," Bukova replied. "It's such a hateful thing to stand there and take it, knowing you cannot serve the other fellow the same way."

"But didn't you fellows resort to any schemes to outwit the enemy?" Jacques asked him.

"Oh yes," said Bukova. "Last winter, when it was very cold and we had to have

fires to keep warm or to thaw out, we used to build a couple of big fires, and the Turks would fire at them all night, while we had little fires at safe distances, and the men would gather around these and keep warm. They never got on to that scheme."

Fresh troops were now arriving daily, and the morning's cannonading began earlier than usual. The roads from the river were literally filled with heavy ordnance which had been brought across the river the day before.

The heavy fire kept up without intermission for four hours, and then the general and his staff mounted their horses. The lieutenant hailed the boys.

"Well, the time is ripe," he called.

"What is up now?" Jacques asked.

"The order has been given for a charge," the lieutenant replied.

"Are they going to take the trenches?" asked Louis.

"Yes; there are ample signs that the enemy is wavering," answered the lieutenant.

"How do you know?" asked Louis.

"Their fire is slackening and their shells are falling shorter, the best evidences that they are retiring," the lieutenant assured him.

Before the boys could get even to the second trench they saw the men in the open between the trenches, and even far beyond—one, two, three lines. As they moved forward they could easily see the first line jump down into the German trenches and then scramble out again on the other side and go on.

The artillery followed closely behind the advancing infantry, planted their batteries and continued firing, and then, an hour or two afterward, each battery would advance, taking up a new position.

What an excitement there was in winning! How jubilant were the French soldiers, who had suffered defeat for so many days, and who now felt that the time had come when their enemy must leave the soil of France!

XVI

THE TERRIFIC FIGHT IN THE OPEN

ONE effect of these mad rushes of the men to gain the enemy's trenches began to show itself, as the afternoon wore away, in the immense numbers of prisoners which were constantly being sent back under guard.

In one trench alone five hundred men were completely surrounded, owing to the impetuous manner in which some of the troops went forward below and above the line which a regiment of the enemy was holding.

The men at night reported some peculiar experiences. In an open field far beyond the last trench were several stacks of hay. A strong fire was somehow kept up across this field, and it was difficult to locate the battery which was doing the work.

In the haze of a battle, and in the excitement, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish things at a distance of three or four hundred

feet, and a little more or a little less smoke here or there does not often enable one to tell where a battery may be.

Many quick-firers use smokeless powder, so that a whole stream of shots may be pouring in at short range without enabling the men or the officers to detect the pieces or the men operating them.

After an hour or so of this fire, which succeeded in keeping the field clear of attacking parties, a couple of soldiers were fortunate enough to locate several men on one of the haystacks. As these stacks are fully fifteen feet high and have a base at least that much in diameter, the firing position was, indeed, a most satisfactory one.

The soldiers who had caught the men at this work quietly crawled along the fence, which brought them slightly to the rear of the men on the stack, and, knowing that it was a most hazardous thing to do, sprang up and dashed across the intervening space and, sheltering themselves behind the bulge of the stack, quickly set fire to it.

The flames soon shot up on all sides, and the gunners, knowing it would be impossible to extinguish the flames, simply rolled off

the stack and tried to get away, but the four gunners were captured by the venturesome men.

They regretted their inability to save the Maxim, because the stack burned too quickly. The moment the flames shot up the officer who had several times before made the attempt ordered his men to charge, and in this way nearly a quarter of a mile was gained.

It is these little happenings which count for so much in the present form of battle manœuvers. It is not by hurling great masses of troops at one another's throats that the best results are obtained; because, although the Germans have frequently tried the mass formation for rushing trenches, such efforts have resulted in a slaughter that makes officers hesitate about repeating the attempt.

But the endless procession of prisoners taken impressed the boys, more than anything else, with the success of their arms.

"I don't suppose any of the prisoners have been exchanged yet," remarked Louis, on meeting the lieutenant.

"That will not be done for some months yet," answered the lieutenant.

"It seems to me that would be a wise

thing to do, immediately after each battle or at stated times each week," Louis said. "It would be an equitable thing for each side to care for its own men, which they can best do by exchanging their prisoners."

"Is there any reason why it could not be arranged in that way?" asked Jacques.

"There is no particular reason, except the likelihood of prisoners thus taken spying out positions for their own people after they have been returned," replied the lieutenant.

"Is it true that in ancient times warring nations did not exchange prisoners?" Jacques asked.

"They not only did not exchange them, but even killed them," said the lieutenant. "Later they made slaves of them, and sometimes prisoners were permitted to go back with their captors and become a part of their own people. That was considered a very humane act; but it was a long time before such a practice as returning prisoners was considered good policy."

"Do you know when prisoners of war were first exchanged?" Jacques asked.

"During the Roman wars, when the army under Pompey was destroyed at Pharsalia

by Julius Cæsar, the victorious commander issued an order to his troops giving each man the privilege of ransoming one of the enemy," the lieutenant answered.

"Do you mean that he gave them permission to sell them again?" asked Jacques.

"Yes," replied the officer; "it was part of the universal plan of those days to make money out of the wars. The practice of killing the captives unless their friends ransomed them was considered legitimate."

"When was that practice stopped?" Jacques asked.

"Not for many years after that time," he answered. "It is interesting to know that the first time an exchange of prisoners took place was at La Rochelle, when the French captured the place from the English, in 1628. After the battle the French sent all the English knights back to England under a flag of truce. This unusual action so impressed the English that they immediately sent back to the French an equal number of captive knights. From this incident began the custom of exchanging prisoners of war."

It was wonderfully impressive to see the

character of the ground over which the victorious forces marched, and there were also sad and ghastly sights—one in particular, where the shells unearthed a burial-ground that had been made only a few weeks before.

The burial-grounds for the large masses of slain are usually trenches, and here the dead are placed indiscriminately. Sometimes the utmost care is taken to identify and locate the places of interment, but as often, in the hurry and anxiety to get the job done as quickly as possible, the earth is shoveled over nameless heroes, and family and friends will never know where their remains rest.

It is a very sad sight to go over these grounds and note the crude crosses erected at every odd corner of field or hill. At one place southwest of Rheims, and not two miles from the place where the boys were now marching, are two rows of dead, over half a mile long, where the grim crosses look like sentinels.

In their charges the soldiers always respected these emblems of the dead. While they cared nothing for the living, it was impressive to see how tenderly they respected those beneath the sod.

Throughout France, as in many other places all over the Continent, shrines are in evidence. These are sacred structures erected at places which are usually the tomb or resting-place of a saint or of one who has rendered some signal service to his country.

Even in England these evidences of the people's veneration for their heroes is not lacking. After the death of Becket, as early as 1170, a shrine was erected to him to which multitudes flocked for many years.

Chaucer, Milton, Gray, Macaulay, Byron, and Shakespeare all portray the religious emotions which swayed people as they knelt before these hallowed places.

How many shrines will France possess when this war is over? Along every highway to the Belgian border, in almost every field, and by the sides of the streams are the most sacred tombs that the hearts of a people can ever turn to.

The people then will know them as the saints that sat around their own firesides, not the canonized ones of old. The relics which are usually placed in the shrines, made of material things, will hereafter be displaced by memories, and when the present genera-

tion shall have passed away, the children of those living to-day will cherish these spots by the remembrances of the deeds of those who suffered and died.

Throughout the following day the charges and forward rushes continued. Ahead was the last hill between the French forces and Rheims. Already the giant spires of the great cathedral were in sight when the smoke and haze of the battle permitted and the range over the hills was sufficiently high to pass over the elevated portion of the ridge on the south side of the river Vesle.

There, not more than ten miles from the city, is a little village called Ville-en-Tardenois. Before the Germans passed that way there was a little church on the single square formed by the cross-roads; but it was now a mass of ruins. For days during this memorable fight on the way to Rheims the sun rarely shone, and frequently there would be violent downpours of rain. As the Sabbath morning was ushered in, however, the sun came out in all its glory.

It was just such a day as all experience when, after days of sullen darkness, the sun looks more brilliant than ever and every one

feels as though there never was a more beautiful day. It was that kind of a morning that greeted the boys.

Oh, how tired they were when they went to bed the night before! On other days it had been a trial to get up; but it seemed very different on this day. After frisking about for some time, they opened the tent flap and reveled in the bright sunlight.

A bugle sounded. Their eyes opened widely. "What does that mean?" asked Louis, as he slowly moved to the flap of the tent.

"I am surprised at your ignorance of the orders. That is the call for services," Jacques told him.

"I had entirely forgotten that," said Louis. "But it is no wonder. We have forgotten Sunday, as well as what it means."

"Do you remember what we were doing just a week ago to-day?" asked Jacques.

"A week ago?" Louis replied, musing. "No; so many things have happened since then—well, the fact is, I haven't been able to fix in my mind a single day for two weeks or more."

"We found the wire in the Marne just a week ago this morning," Jacques reminded him.

"How did you know that was the bugle-call for church?" Louis asked.

"Oh, I just knew it," said Jacques, laughing.

"Then you are just guessing—eh?" Louis questioned.

"No," confessed Jacques; "the lieutenant told me last night that the chaplain came in during the afternoon and told him that if the Germans will let us there may be services alongside the little church."

That was, indeed, the first call, and it was now nearly nine o'clock. There was but a single line of defense between the French army and the Vesle. It was rumored that the final fight for possession of the territory south of the river would be made during the day.

But services would be held, whatever the fighting forces might do. When the boys arrived at the little square, some soldiers were already dragging boxes across the open space, and others were gathering fir branches and decorating the improvised altar, which was placed near the blackened wall of the church, and in front of which was a green carpet of grass that was as fresh as though no enemy had ever been there.

Fully five hundred men stood in a semicircle around that altar, on the only green and unmarred grass in that entire neighborhood. Even the fields were torn up and tramped over, so that vegetation was entirely destroyed, but in the shadow of the ruined church the grass smiled as brightly as it ever did, and gave off a freshness which tried to sweeten the sulphurous odors which the winds wafted from the battle-fields.

An army chaplain officiated and one of the soldiers acted as chorister; the regimental band furnished the music, and opened with Chopin's Funeral March.

While the band was playing, a battery of artillery opened on a German aeroplane, and the addition of the discharges made a most singular impression on all present.

Words cannot express the majesty, the intense and gripping emotions, which the scene evoked. All music on the field of battle has a stimulating effect, but to hear the solemn requiem while standing in the immediate face of death is so far removed from all the experiences of life that language cannot depict its depth.

Not once during the entire service did the

great guns cease their rumbling. The worshipers could hear the growls of thirty miles of angry steel throats, but through it all the men stood there as though they had grown up with those noises in their ears; and even when, at intervals, a bomb from some airship would come down near the worshipers, and give its vicious roar and spiteful flash, few even turned their heads to heed the warning.

When the boys left that scene and slowly walked to their tent, they were silent. All the spirit of joy at the brightness of the sun had passed away. During the rest of that day they were subdued and thoughtful; yet they had not heard a single word that had been uttered during the entire service.

As the sun was setting two riders from the bicycle squad came to headquarters and shouted that the last trench on the hill had been taken. The lieutenant grasped a wheel, and the boys were soon in their saddles and following.

Arriving at the crest of the hill, the view from that point across the great plain beyond Rheims, a distance of ten miles, opened up a prospect that fascinated them beyond measure.

The lieutenant gazed and was silent. The river could be seen in the distance, threading its way through the beautiful valley. What was left of the vineyards could be noted on every hand, and the houses stood out all over the landscape.

The lines of the German forces could now be seen in a way never observed before. It is strange how little had been seen of them in the past encounters, because they were so admirably screened or too far distant to be recognized.

But now there was spread before them the whole panoply of war. Where the men could not be seen the lines were indicated by the white puffs and sometimes by flashes.

Every battery in the brigade, and many not regularly attached, were lining up on the crest. The boys knew that the Germans had gone down that hill, never again to return. With the line of artillery on that hill so thickly studded that the infantry could hardly pass through, the fire was so deadly that a million men could not have reached the top of the incline.

"They will not stop now until they have crossed the river and reached the height be-

yond," said the lieutenant, without for a moment relaxing his gaze.

Until the sun had set the artillery never ceased its thundering. The roads leading to the city were crowded with the retreating enemy, and to these lines of travel the artillery directed its fire. It was impossible for them to seek shelter, and the slaughter was terrible during the last hour and before the twilight finally shut out the foe.

Even then, whenever there would be a glimmer of light within range of the gunners, they did not cease their efforts. Meantime the infantry did not rest. In the darkness they marched down the hill, column after column, and massed ready for the finishing stroke in the morning.

The history of the world will never record a more disastrous retreat than the one just described. Others have perhaps caused greater loss of life and produced greater havoc to the defeated foe, but none could equal the fifty-mile retreat that took place when the great German army was outflanked and its entire system of transportation was disorganized and thrown into confusion, following the magnificent offensive tactics displayed by

the same army during the three preceding weeks.

The boys were awakened by one salvo of artillery after another. It was the greeting sent to the invaders. With field-glasses the boys could see the last of the Germans crossing the river, and long lines of men creeping up behind, while at every available place the hillside showed lines of moving objects like strings, where the batteries and the ammunition-trains were going down to take up new positions.

Strange as it may seem, the side of the hill down which they traveled was not so badly marked with artillery-fire. They had seen evidences of the conflict which were worse than those they met along that incline. This was due to the fact that the artillery were the first to be taken away, lest the impetuous rushes of the French should capture them; and there were few good positions between the hill and the river where they could make a stand, and, besides that, the heights occupied by the French poured down such a murderous fire that it was impossible to hold any position long.

The lower ground over which they were

now passing was made historic by the great aviation contest held in 1909, the first event where aeroplanes from the different countries met to compete for the supremacy of the air.

On that occasion Germany was not represented, but during the three days that her forces contested for the supremacy of these plains she flew more machines in a single day than all the entries recorded and operated in the entire ten days of that meet.

XVII

THE DISASTROUS GERMAN DEFEAT

THE excitement was so intense that the boys could not sleep that night. It was the same with many others in that jubilant army. They knew, however, that now the fight would be still more bitter and intense.

The foe had a number of hills beyond the river which must be taken before the next retreat could follow. The city of Rheims was within range of some of these heights.

South of the city, and where the brigade to which the boys were attached was camped, Napoleon fought one of his battles, in which the Russians were his foe. The lieutenant commented on this fact, and remarked that it was curious how time could so change the conditions and the sentiments of people that their most dreaded foe a hundred years ago should now be their staunchest friend.

That battle was fought in March, 1814, and its lines are still plainly visible, due to the care which has been bestowed on retaining the principal points of interest connected with the conflict.

The city itself was an ancient Gallic town; its population at the beginning of the present war was about one hundred and twenty thousand. It was one of the leading manufacturing and commercial cities in France, the center for the manufacture and exportation of champagne, for the production of woolen and other goods, and was the seat of one of the most noted academies of sciences.

The cathedral is regarded as one of the most beautiful in the world. It has two massive towers, and the interior, which is 466 feet long and 124 feet high, is unsurpassed. Between the towers is a great central rose and three magnificent canopied portals, or openings.

The Middle Ages produced nothing to equal it, and the statues which adorn its front have not been excelled by any sculpture, ancient or modern.

Joan of Arc crowned Charles VII. of France in this edifice, in 1429. Since the year 496

it has been the place where the rulers, emperors, and kings of France were crowned, up to the time of Napoleon.

It was in the city of Rheims that Emperor William, the grandfather of the present Kaiser, made his headquarters in the war of 1870–71, when the Germans were besieging the city of Paris.

For these reasons the city was one of the most noted places in France, and Frenchmen took pride in it for its historic associations.

It lies on the eastern bank of the Vesle. The Germans crossed the river and passed through to take up positions on the crowning hills beyond.

Reports were now coming in from places along the entire line. The Germans had been forced back, and the right wing bent so that it ran directly north from Rheims and left a large part of France free.

The halt in the retreat was made along a line which is particularly strong for defensive purposes. The position at Rheims is characteristic of this, where the Germans were posted on a height north of the river, and in such a manner that it would cost many lives to dislodge them.

As a result the soldiers went forward and began to dig themselves in, and behind these ditches were planted the batteries which would for ever prevent their foe from taking another step toward Paris.

To install these works and to carry out the plans of building other defenses required daring and courage, and the artillery suffered most during the early days of their establishment. Conductor Desbrus, of the Fifty-seventh Artillery, was attacked by four of the German batteries before his pieces could be installed, and although the first and the second crew of men were all killed or wounded, he stuck to his post, and when the third set of men were sent to him, and the battery began to talk, he had the satisfaction of seeing the German batteries wiped out.

When the last gun of the enemy was still being fired he was struck by fragments of a shell and wounded in many places. The lieutenant and the boys were two hundred yards to the rear of the battery after it got into action, and when they saw the havoc that the 75-millimeter guns of Desbrus produced they were wild with excitement.

They rushed forward to get a closer view,

when one of the helpers came back with the sad message that Desbrus had been wounded. "We must help that brave fellow," said the lieutenant. "Run for a stretcher!" he shouted to the boys.

They went back to the reserve station, and fairly snatched up one of the stretchers and carried it along on their wheels. The lieutenant was there, and he rendered first aid while waiting.

What a sight met their eyes as they approached! Eight men were dead, and four wounded, who were still sitting up.

"We will get you out of this," said the lieutenant.

"But I will not go until the last gun stops," said Desbrus.

"Never mind," said the corporal. "We can take care of them now."

While thus caring for the two most desperately wounded, the boys were delighted at the appearance of two more stretchers, which came at the request of the boys.

Desbrus was carefully placed on the stretcher, and the two boys picked him up and marched away, while two of the other men were similarly taken by the others.

The surgeons and nurses tenderly cared for them; and when General Cheron heard of the disaster which had befallen the brave conductor, he hurried over. He saw the brave man, and, taking a medal from his breast, he pinned it on the breast of the wounded man.

"But there were men there who were braver than I. That man there was wounded the first volley, and he never stopped," said the conductor.

"Here is a hero medal for him also," said the general, as he stepped over and pinned another medal on the soldier indicated.

As they passed out it was evident that the boys were impressed with the feelings and the actions of the men as they received the decorations.

"What is the medal which the general gave to the men?" asked Jacques.

"It is the Medal of the Veterans, a distinction conferred on those who have shown exceptional bravery on the field of battle," the lieutenant explained.

"What is the Legion of Honor, and its object?" inquired Louis.

"That is an order established by Napoleon,

when he was First Consul, as a reward for civil and military services," replied the lieutenant.

"Doesn't it award anything but medals?" Louis asked.

"It has a very large amount of property

Legion of Honor. France.
Fig. 20.

Iron Cross. Germany.
Fig. 21.

and funds, and all the revenues derived go to the support and aid of wounded and disabled veterans," the lieutenant answered.

"What is required to earn the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor?" asked Louis.

"The original provision was that the man

must have been mentioned in despatches, to have gone through four campaigns, to have been wounded in face of the enemy, or to have accomplished some signal act of bravery or devotion," the lieutenant told him.

"But is this military medal the same as the medal of the Legion of Honor?" Louis inquired.

"Substantially so. It confers equal distinction, and, like the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, there are many exceptional cases where the decoration is conferred. This is one of them," the lieutenant answered.

"Are many people entitled to wear them?" Jacques wanted to know.

"Previous to the war of 1870, about fifteen thousand soldiers and civilians were thus decorated; and since that time, up to the opening of the present conflict, the cross has been conferred on about fifty thousand," replied the lieutenant.

"Is that medal the same as the Iron Cross?" Jacques asked.

"No," the lieutenant told him, "but the object is the same. The Order of the Iron Cross was founded in 1813, in Prussia, as a reward for military service against the French.

It was reorganized during the war of 1870, and at that time was intended to confer distinction only on a few princes and generals, two classes which did not number more than two thousand."

"But I have heard that they now give it in large numbers to common soldiers," Jacques remarked.

"They have modified the provisions to such a degree that it is claimed the decorations conferred during the first month of this war exceeded one hundred thousand. I do not know how true that is, however," the lieutenant stated.

"I saw one of them at the general's headquarters," said Louis. "It had the letter W and the date 1870."

"The initial stands for Frederick William. The ribbon is black with a white border," the lieutenant told him.

An hour afterward, as the lieutenant met them he said: "I have sad news for you. Desbrus has just died, and we shall give him a military funeral and ship his body to Paris."

How this announcement shocked the boys, much as they had witnessed trying scenes!

But it was a joy to remember the happiness the conferring of the medal gave to that hero.

"How many wounds did he get before he fell?" Jacques asked.

"At least a dozen; but the trouble was not so much from the wounds as from lockjaw," replied the lieutenant.

"It must be awful to die in that way," Jacques said. "Why is it called *lockjaw?*"

"It is a peculiar disease which is now found to be due to a germ that comes from filth or from soil which is impregnated with the bacillus," the lieutenant explained. "The first evidence of it is usually a pain in the back of the neck, which usually stiffens so that it cannot be turned. Afterward an uneasy sensation arises at the root of the tongue, and finally it is impossible for the patient to swallow; then follow violent pains in the lower part of the body, the muscles of the spine become affected, the jaws are firmly set, and death invariably follows."

"Have they found no way to cure it?" Jacques asked.

"A serum has been discovered for the disease which renders a patient immune, and if it is injected in time no danger may be looked

for from this source, which was the cause of a greater number of deaths in past wars than from the wounds themselves," the lieutenant told him.

"What is a serum, and how is it made?" Louis asked.

"That is a very difficult thing to explain so it will be clearly understood," replied the lieutenant. "The principle at the bottom of it lies in the knowledge that, for instance, there is nothing so deadly to a human being as to be infected by decayed human tissue."

"My uncle is a physician," said Louis, "and I heard him say that when a surgeon is dissecting a human body and the knife used inflicts a wound, it is almost sure to prove fatal."

"That states the case exactly," the lieutenant replied.

"But wouldn't the same thing happen if I should cut my hand with a knife used on beef or mutton?" Louis questioned.

"No," answered the lieutenant; "the principle is, that the decayed tissues of like will destroy the like. Now advantage has been taken of that, and a serum is made from these germs, and this is injected into the blood of the patient; in doing so it destroys

the germ which causes lockjaw, but does not affect other germs."

"That was a wonderful discovery," remarked Jacques.

"It is the practice now to provide serums for diphtheria and dysentery, as well as lockjaw, or *tetanus*, as it is called, because the locking of the jaws is only one of the symptoms and effects of the disease," continued the lieutenant.

"Why was it that poor Desbrus was not injected?" Jacques asked.

"It is to be regretted, but the stock of the serum was so low, owing to the great demand, that there was none on hand until it was too late," explained the lieutenant.

"Does it take a long time to make it?" asked Jacques.

"The serum is obtained from the blood of horses," the lieutenant answered. "Shortly before the opening of the war, before the immense improvements had been made in its production, it required nearly four months to prepare, but now the time has been reduced one-half."

"Horses! Are the horses killed?" asked Jacques.

"Oh no," replied the lieutenant. "Each horse furnishes about twelve liters of blood during the week, and then the horse rests eight or ten days before the next period of tapping. In this way each horse provides about three hundred doses during that period. In one month the Pasteur Institute has furnished over a hundred thousand doses, and that will now be increased fully ten times within the next few months."

"But how do they get the lockjaw poison in? That is what I cannot understand," said Jacques.

"The horse," replied the lieutenant, "is first inoculated with a few very light doses of lockjaw germs, and then the doses of the poison, or lockjaw toxin, as it is called, are increased so that the horse becomes accustomed to it, although he has so much of the poison in his blood that if only a few drops should be injected into a fresh horse it would kill the animal. The serum is then made from the animal so rendered immune from the poison."

"I only wish poor Desbrus could have been cured," regretted Louis.

"It is not a cure, but a preventative," the

lieutenant told him, "and steps are now being taken to provide every surgeon and nurse on the battle-field with a sufficient supply of doses to treat all wounded the moment they are found."

An entire week of charges and counter-charges now took place, both forces in the mean time making their positions more secure.

One morning the lieutenant came in with a bit of news that greatly interested the boys. They were to have a visit from a group of boys from the Department of the Seine, who were to be placed in the line to observe the actual operations of the fighting forces.

"What is the object of that?" inquired Louis.

"They are some of the young men who will be called out in the drafts of 1915 and 1916," the lieutenant told him. "They will be shown how the trenches are made, and how the men live and fight in them."

"How many will there be?" Jacques asked.

"I don't know how many will visit us," replied the lieutenant, "but there are about sixteen hundred, all told, from that department, and I understand they will be brought to Meaux, and from that point divided up

into companies of several hundred each, so that they can be easily transported. From Meaux they will have to undergo a trial march; and as they landed there yesterday, we may expect them within a day or two."

The following day three hundred of the boys arrived under command of Major Bedin. The lieutenant was there to assist in welcoming them.

General Cheron welcomed the major and assured him that it would give him and the officers of his staff much pleasure to see that the boys were conducted to the trenches and the points of interest and military value explained to them.

He said: "I appreciate the work of young men, because I am fortunate enough to have two boys of your own age, who for distinguished and meritorious services have been promoted to the rank of corporal, and I shall detail them to take charge of a portion of your party. We are fortunate in having a very entertaining number of enemies in our front, and they may give you a warm reception, but I hope the conducting officers will not get you into serious trouble."

The boys, after this eulogium of the general,

were the heroes of the day. After the reception, the visitors were urged to look around until luncheon was served, and then they gathered around the boys and plied them with all sorts of questions.

But their pleasantest experience was their immediate recognition by many of the visitors. One squad was from the district in which Louis lived, and two of the boys had been his fellow-students.

"How did you get into the service?" asked one.

"Well, we simply broke in; they couldn't help themselves," said Jacques, smiling.

"I heard that you fixed some machines for them when they were sending troops across the city. Is that so?" inquired another.

"Yes; we rescued about a dozen or so; but that didn't amount to much. When we got up here they simply had to keep us; they didn't know how to get rid of us," Louis answered, and the visitors laughed at his neat way of putting it.

"We want to go with you this afternoon," a number of the visitors declared.

"Will you take us right into the trenches?" asked one.

"Yes," Jacques answered, "unless the Germans have something special on hand this afternoon."

"What do you mean by that?" asked another.

"They may make up their minds to begin a fearful cannonading, and there might be great danger," Jacques replied.

After luncheon, when all were ready, one squad was placed under the direction of the two young corporals.

As they were traveling down the approaches Louis told them:

"You see these zigzag ditches are the laterals, and here are the *carrefours* (where two or more trenches cross). Then here are enlarged places called *squares*, which are intended for men passing each other. Do you see these lanes which run out here, and simply stop twenty or fifty feet away? They lead nowhere — that is, they end in a dead wall."

"I can't see of what use they can be," several remarked in concert.

"They are called *impasses*, or blind alleys, and in them a number of men can be held for an emergency, as when a charge or some

important movement is contemplated," Louis explained.

"Why, this looks like a miniature town!" one of the visitors remarked.

"So it is," Louis stated. "Look at the names of the streets and avenues. Here is Rue Poincairé, there King Street, and on this side is Rue Brussels. Just at the next turn is one of the largest places, and they have named it Place de Liberté."

"A fellow is pretty likely to get lost in this place," one of the visitors surmised.

"Of course, unless he knows just where the streets are," said Louis.

"But I don't see how it is possible to find any one here," the visitor queried; "or don't you ever try to find anybody in the trenches?"

"Oh yes," Louis told him; "we must be able to reach the officers, and they are stationed in their proper places, which are known to us."

"Do you mean by the streets or avenues?" the visitor inquired.

"Oh no! by their hotels. They live at hotels here," Louis replied.

The visitors laughed at this statement,

which was made in all sincerity and seriousness.

"Hotels in here?" they queried.

"I'll show you some of them," Louis said. "Here is the Hôtel Savoy, and on the other side of the periscope is the Hôtel Royal."

"What, those holes in the side walls!" a visitor exclaimed.

"Yes; they are places of refuge, and a hotel is a place of refuge, isn't it?" Jacques answered.

They were now passing through the last lateral, which led to the first, or firing, trench. A headboard had the following inscription, which the visiting boys craned their necks to read. It said: "Entrance to the Cinematograph. Admission free for the next performance."

There was a shout of laughter as the boys read and discussed the invitation, but a terrific crash stopped the laughter and many a face turned pale.

"What was that?" asked one of the visitors in a frightened voice.

"That was only a small shrapnel shell. The larger—" Louis began, but he was interrupted by the discharge of two more.

"Hug the side of the trenches!" he shouted. "No, not that side. Stand close to the wall on the side the shots come from."

"Yes," added Jacques, "get as close to the Germans as possible," and he smiled as some of the visitors looked at him to discover whether he was jesting or not.

XVIII

THE FINAL CHARGE BEFORE RHEIMS

"HOW close is the nearest German trench to where we are?" asked one of the visiting boys.

"From this place their first trench is about one hundred yards," Louis replied. "It is really a disadvantage to be so far away."

The visitors crowded around in surprise. "What!" they exclaimed, safer close up than at a distance?"

"Certainly," Louis assured them.

"Why so?" they asked.

"We had proof of this a few moments ago," Louis told them. "Several shells fell behind us at the trench we just left. Where the trenches are close together the German gunners are afraid that they will hit their own men, and the same is true with our gunners."

"It must be interesting if the trenches are close together," one of the visitors remarked.

"Some very amusing things happen, and sometimes tragic ones also," Jacques reminded them. "About five hundred feet to the left, the trenches of the two armies are not more than fifty feet apart. Some of the men manning our trench are a set of jolly rascals. One day they secured a pumpkin, and, scooping it out, filled it with the latest news, in the way of French newspapers, and rolled it over to the German trench."

"They are an awfully misinformed lot over there," Louis told them, and then the boys tried to tell them about the real facts of the war. "The Germans are great singers," Louis said, "and whenever they begin one of their concerts and try to work in the 'Wacht am Rhein' our boys respond with the 'Marseillaise.'"

"Not far on this side of that place where the trenches are about a hundred and fifty feet apart," Jacques continued, "some ingenious Germans put up a most intricate form of wire fencing. You can see the barbed wire all along, which was put there to guard against surprises.

"A sergeant from our trench crawled up in the night with his clippers and riddled the

structure. The next night the Germans put it up again, and the sergeant treated it the same way. The next night they not only rigged it up in better style, but also hung on it a lot of bottles and tin cans partly filled with metal, so that if the wires should be disturbed they would rattle and thus give the alarm.

"The sergeant discovered the scheme, and glided out with a couple of ropes which he tied to the wire fence, some distance apart, and, returning, began to ring the chimes. A volley followed. Then, after the volley ceased, the ropes were again pulled, and another volley followed. It was great sport."

Many pages would be required to narrate the remarkable experiences of the soldiers of these opposing armies, or to record and illustrate characteristics, many most worthy, that show how truly human nature asserts itself, however bitter the enmity existing between nations at war.

It was truly a gala-day for the visitors from the city. How they envied the corporals, in their trim suits! When leaving that night for the return trip to the city, they were loud in praise of the boys and the courtesies which had been extended to them.

To the left of the position occupied by the brigade was a stretch of open country not occupied by either of the forces, for the reason that almost any position which would be taken in that area would be dominated by the guns on one side or the other.

Considerable manœuvering was indulged in to occupy this territory, not so much for its real military value as for the moral effect. Commanders are always alert to carry out plans which promise success to the men in the ranks. They fight better under such stimulus.

Before entering the triangle, as they called it, the French had to pass through what was once a beautiful little village, which had been entirely destroyed by the Germans when they first passed through, more than three weeks previous to this time, only one lone house being left.

Every structure in the town had been burned, and even the two stone houses—one an old relic, with walls fully two feet thick—plainly showed where the large shells had bored holes through the walls before exploding.

The nearest trenches were about one hundred and fifty feet from the former location

of the first building in this village, and the large, ragged holes in the stone walls greatly interested the boys, who actually longed to visit the ruins.

To attempt to cross the intervening space would be sure death, because the triangle was jealously guarded by the Germans.

One day while in the trench which was nearest to the little untouched house a shell struck it and exploded. Instantly, it seemed, the house was a mass of flames. The sergeant in charge of the trench which they occupied remarked that it had been hit, not by a shrapnel shell, but by an incendiary bomb.

On the return to headquarters this occurrence was the first to be discussed as soon as the lieutenant arrived.

"I understand the Germans have destroyed the little house near the triangle," he said.

"We were there when it was hit," Jacques replied. "The sergeant said it was an incendiary bomb. What is the difference between the incendiary and other bombs?"

"The incendiary bombs are filled with such materials as will ignite with very little heat," the lieutenant told him.

"Do you know what materials are used?" Jacques asked.

"Oh yes," the lieutenant replied, "the principal ingredients are celluloid, phosphorus, and wax. Certain proportions of these chemicals, if properly mixed together and the product allowed to stand in the open, will be ignited by the heat of the sun."

Directly south of the triangle was a dense woods where the French were in position, the road going along this woods to the west, and a quarter of a mile beyond was a wooded area to the right. There was no evidence that the Germans were anywhere near the latter woods.

General Cheron was determined to capture the triangle, and for this purpose he sent the bicycle squad east along the road to reconnoiter. They passed the woods and were not molested, and reported accordingly. Jacques and Louis were almost disconsolate because the scouts had gone off without them, but they determined to be on hand when the forces moved in.

About three o'clock the order was given for the infantry to move along the road and

intrench at the west woods, just as the second squad were passing the woods on the way back.

In passing back they learned that a regiment of the enemy was posted behind the woods and had its pickets, or outposts, close up to the road. Unquestionably these troops were thus located for the purpose of surprising any force that might move down the road, the only avenue accessible to the triangle.

The distance across the field from the road on which the woods faced was about eight hundred feet. Not two hundred feet farther was the first line of trenches held by the French, and behind which the bicycle corps manœuvered.

The French column was swinging down the road, doomed to certain destruction when they reached the wood, for it was certain that the Germans would cut off their retreat after they had once been thrown into confusion.

Two of the cyclers were coming in with the report that a German force had been discovered, and they also now saw for the first time that a French force was advancing down the road.

Kane, the leader, grasped the situation at once. "Go to the east and signal them to return," he said.

Jacques and another were the first to respond. The signals were not heeded.

Kane's eyes flashed as he saw the trap, and he cried out, "The boys must be notified, and we are the ones to do it," and so saying he mounted his wheel and started across the field.

"He is going to his death," said Louis. It did, indeed, seem so, for he had not gone half-way across before a single shot from a sharp-shooter in the woods brought him down.

The men saw him writhe and hold up a signaling hand. "He wants some one else to come on!" cried Radcliffe, "and here goes!"

This was too much for one of the men, who followed Radcliffe, and they speeded to the right, so as to offer a poorer target; but now half a dozen shots rang out, and both were dismounted, yet still the column came on unheeding.

The boys were now almost unnerved at the sight. Three men had fallen, and still the message had not been delivered.

"Well, they can't kill all of us," said the sergeant, and he turned to the men.

Without an order every man mounted.

"Some one must reach the infantry. Are you all ready?" the sergeant asked.

The answering shouts were sufficient to assure him, and as one man they sped forward.

"Keep in open order, and pay no attention to any one or anything but the infantry beyond," cried the sergeant.

The eight men, including Jacques and Louis, knew the hazard of the enterprise. It would probably mean death to most of them, but they also knew that it might mean death or captivity for five hundred, and there was no hesitation.

They leaned forward and pedaled with desperation. Within five hundred feet of the road the boys heard something crack and buzz. It was impossible to define it. Sometimes a wheel would appear to stagger and then drop behind.

Jacques was ten feet ahead of Louis. To his left was the sergeant who had given the order—that is, he was there but a moment ago; but he had missed the large figure, and he saw only Jacques. Soon Jacques's wheel seemed to turn from side to side in quick,

wavy jerks, and suddenly it turned half-way round as Jacques fell to one side and was pitched clear of the other wheels by the momentum.

It is a singular thing that this did not seem to affect Louis very much. He knew that Jacques had been shot, but for some reason or other he didn't feel badly about it. It seemed to be a sort of natural thing to expect it, so it never occurred to him to stop.

Then he felt a peculiar sensation. Why should any one want to hit him in the back? The blow there was as plain as anything he had ever felt, but he would not look around or ask what it meant. The infantry were still coming.

Ahead of him was one of the experts, not fifteen feet away. Louis did not see him fall, and the first thing he experienced was the impact of his wheel against the body of the man. He was thrown from his wheel; and when he arose the impact and the sudden change of position and conditions brought him to his senses.

Only two men were still on wheels, and they were now far ahead; and as he tried to extricate his wheel things began to turn

around, and while he pulled and pulled at the wheel he felt that he was making no progress. Then he began to feel tired, and this gave way to an entirely new sensation, beyond his control, to which he submitted, and he knew no more until he woke up in the hospital the next day and saw poor Jacques on a cot by his side.

Only two men of the eleven who were in that squad reached the infantry, and they were saved. The brave deed of the bicycle squad was witnessed by three lines of trenches, and the general was so exasperated that he immediately rushed up two regiments and two companies of quick-firers, who, regardless of the storm of shot and shell, rushed across the intervening space, captured four hundred men and three Maxims, and brought the cyclers to headquarters.

Singular as it may seem, only one of the squad was killed, all the others being wounded, some very severely.

"I don't remember when I was hit," said Jacques.

"Where did they get you?" asked Louis.

"The doctor says I was hit twice, in the arm and in the head," Jacques replied; "that

is why I am bandaged up so much. But you got an awful wound, so the doctors say."

"Well," said Louis, "I can feel something in my chest; I suppose that is where I was hit?"

"Yes," Jacques agreed; "they said the bullet went right through you."

"But I thought some one hit me in the back," responded Louis.

The nurses, generously permitting this conversation, now forbid further communication.

The lieutenant was at the side of the cots as soon as the boys were comfortable, and later in the day the general arrived. "Always in some trouble," he said, in a kindly, chiding manner. "This has got to be such a frequent thing with you that I have sent for your parents."

"Sent for my parents!" Jacques repeated, as he made an effort to move. "Are they in Paris?"

"Certainly," the general replied; "we are expecting them any moment." The tears came into Louis's eyes. How happy it made him feel!

"Oh, thank you!" said Louis. "You are very kind. But I am sorry that I couldn't reach the road."

"But some of the boys did, and you helped by your presence," the general told him; and, what is more, you showed courage and a determination to save the infantry, even though it should be at the sacrifice of your life. But the nurses are getting cross. Cheer up, both of you! The doctors tell me you are all right."

Two hours afterward a quiet little party entered the hospital. Both boys were asleep, and the father and mother and little Jeanne stood there and silently wept as they saw their white faces; even the nurses, steeled as they were to sad sights, turned their heads and walked away as they saw that group.

Soon Louis opened his eyes. Jeanne started up to rush into his arms, but her mother restrained her. "Mother!" was all he said, and his eyes closed and he lay still. The nurse sprang forward.

"He has merely fainted," she said. "He is very weak."

Jacques had been disturbed, and he opened his eyes. "Oh, you have come!" he said, and the nurse held up a hand, while he turned his face to Louis's cot. "Poor fellow! he was badly hurt. But I am all right."

When Louis was finally restored he was very

happy, notwithstanding his wounded chest, and two days afterward the boys were carefully taken to Paris and installed in one of the great hospitals there, near Louis's home, where the parents of the boys were permitted to visit them until their recovery a month afterward.

Yes, Corporals Raoul and Egmont did return to the army. Nothing could check the determination to fight for their country and to offer her their best services in time of need.

There was a remarkably enthusiastic scene on Avenue de Wagram when it was known that the boys were again about to leave for the front. They saw the tears and heard the cheering, and it was hard to say which affected them with greater emotion. It seemed as though a great burden had passed from them when their auto-car finally was permitted to move through the throng, and they knew they were going back for the *Glory of France.*

THE END

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